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Origins of MARVEL COMICS™

by

Stan Lee

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STAN LEE

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To Joan and Joanie, my wondrous wife
and dazzling daughter.
No wonder I feel like a superhero.

In the beginning Marvel created the Bullpen and the Style.

And the Bullpen was without form, and was void; and darkness was upon the face of the Artists. And the Spirit of Marvel moved upon the face of the Writers.

And Marvel said, Let there be The Fantastic Four. And there was The Fantastic Four.

And Marvel saw The Fantastic Four. And it was good.

PROLOGUE

GREETINGS, culture lovers.

Welcome to the wild and wondrous world of Marvel Comics—perhaps the last refuge of the young in heart, and in spirit.

Marvel Comics. Let us savor the sound of those heart-warming words. Let us bask in the glow of the pleasure they promise. Marvel Comics. Not so much a name as a special state of mind. Not so much a group of magazines as a mood, a movement, a mild and momentary madness.

But even as I pen these imperishable words, a nagging thought doth assail me. Somewhere out there, furtively skulking amongst Marveldom Assembled, what if there be some hapless soul who hath not yet tasted the heady nectar of Marvel mania? Even one such luckless holdout means we've somehow failed. For it signifies that somewhere, spelunking through the uncharted caverns of life, one star-crossed voyager must make his fearsome journey alone, without the brightly burning beacon of the Marvel mythos to pierce the gloom, to light his way.

And so, this volume. Call it a sampler if you will. Call it a few delicate drops of literary elixir gleaned from a bottomless sea of superhero sagas. Or call it, perhaps, a remedy, a pictorial tonic to relieve the awesome affliction that threatens us all: the endlessly spreading virus of too much reality in a world that is losing its legends—a world that has lost its heroes.

S. L.

PART ONE

IF ONE IS GOOD, FOUR WILL BE BETTER

MARVEL Comics wasn't always Marvel Comics. When I started working there, in 1939, it was called Timely Comics. I never found out why. And they kept me so busy that I never had time to ask. To be truthful, I never even thought about it. It was also called Timely Comics before I started working there—and after. But let's not get bogged down in the very first paragraph. We have to start somewhere.

I was seventeen when I joined the staff at Timely. In those days, seventeen was a lot younger than it is now. Today, a lot of executives at various publishing houses, movie companies, and TV networks don't seem much older than seventeen. But in '39 it was different.

Anyway, I'm not about to tell you too much about those early days. This book would have to be twice the size. Besides, if this one sells well I've got to save something for Volume Two. Suffice it to say that I started at Timely as staff writer, proofreader, and general all-around gofer. A few months later my two bosses, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby (about whom there'll be more later), parted company with Timely, and my publisher, Martin Goodman (that's right, more about him later, too), asked me to fill in as editor and art director until he could find someone old enough for the job. Well, working in comics must age a fella real fast because he never did replace me and I've been there ever since.

Now then, even though this titanic tome is about the magnificence of Marvel, you've got to know a little bit about Timely so that you'll have the right perspective. We'll get to the pictures soon, I promise.

During the first two decades that I toiled for Timely the comic-book business was a fairly simplistic operation. If cowboy films were the rage we produced a lot of Westerns. If cops and robbers were in vogue we'd grind out a profusion of crime titles. If the trend turned to love stories, Timely (as well as the competition) became big in ro-

mance mags. We simply gave the public what it wanted—or so we thought.

As for our audience, we all assumed that our readers primarily belonged to the bubble-gum brigade. Oh sure, there were a few inconoclastic adults here and there who might dip into a comic book upon occasion; and we knew we could always sell a certain percentage of copies to servicemen who doted upon easy-to-read escapist literature. But basically, our readers ranged from toddlers to kids the age of thirteen or fourteen—or so we thought.

Notice how I cleverly employ the device of repeating the same provocative phrase at the end of two successive paragraphs? This is to let you know that there may be more than meets the eye contained herein. It's a device I've often used in writing comic-book scripts, and I didn't want it to slip by unnoticed.

Okay. Now that I've clued you in, you know the background of the comic-book biz. You're almost at the point where the world is ready to herald the birth of Marvel. But first, even as the suspense keeps mounting, bear with me for just a little while longer as we briefly discuss the dramatis personae up to this point.

Who were the people who actually created and produced America's comic books? To answer that burning question we must be aware that comics have always been a high-volume low-profit-per-unit business. Which is a polite way of saying that they never paid very much to the writers or artists. If memory serves me (and why shouldn't it?), I think I received about fifty cents per page for the first script I wrote in those early days. Comics have always been primarily a piecework business. You got paid by the page for what you wrote. The more pages you could grind out, the more money you made. The comic-book writer had to be a comic-book freak, he had to be dedicated to comics; he certainly couldn't be in it for the money. And, unlike most other forms of writing, there were no royalty payments at the end of the road . . . no residuals . . . no copyright ownership. You wrote your pages, got your check, and that was that.

Perhaps this little background will serve to explain why the quality of writing in the early comic books left just a little bit to be desired. We knew we were writing for kids. (Or so we thought, remember?) The pay wasn't extravagant enough to attract too many Hemingways or Bernard Shaws. Even Mickey Spillane, who had free-lanced for

Timely briefly in the 1940s, soon gave it up to seek fame and fortune in somewhat different areas.

It wasn't much different for the artists. Their rate of pay was somewhat higher than the writers' but it took them longer to complete a page, so things seemed to even up. As a matter of fact, there were many artists who also wrote their own stories in those days—and who did the lettering and coloring as well. I'm not going to mention their names here, since this isn't intended to be a history of the comics, but rather a personal peek at the origin of Marvel (which we're sure to get to sooner or later—honest), and there isn't room to mention all of them, and those I omitted would never talk to me again, and a fella like me needs all the friends he can get.

Well, that's it for now. If anyone needs any more background material, see me after class and I'll recommend some supplementary reading. The big moment is near at hand. You can almost feel a hush in the atmosphere outside. It's as though all the world is waiting for the coming of. . . . The Fantastic Four.

Let me take you back to 1961. It's been twenty-two years since I first started with Timely, and I'm still editor, art director, and head writer there. At the moment, the trend is monster stories, so we're turning out a pandemonious plethora of BEMs and scaly-skinned scaries. Jack Kirby, he of Captain America fame when I first started at Timely, had long since left and then recently returned to the fold as our top artist. Jack and I were having a ball turning out monster stories with such imperishable titles as "Xom, the Creature Who Swallowed the Earth," "Grottu, the Giant Ant-Eater," "Thomgorr, the Anti-Social Alien," "Fin Fang Foom" (I never could remember what his shtick was—if he was a he), and others of equally redeeming artistic and literary value.

Yep, there we were blithely grinding out our merry little monster yarns. At the same time National Comics was still featuring Superman, Batman, and all their other costumed cuties. The Archie group was likewise doing business as usual with Archie, Jughead, and their fun-loving friends. Meanwhile, Harvey Publications was holding its own with Casper the Ghost and his capricious cohorts. Also in contention were the Charleton line of assorted comic-book titles, as well as the Dell and Gold Key offerings. We were turning out comics by the carload, but nothing much was happening.

At about this time I had a talk with my wife. Actually, there's nothing very unusual about that—we often talk to each other. But this time Joan was commenting about the fact that after twenty years of producing comics I was still writing television material, advertising copy, and newspaper features in my spare time. She wondered why I didn't put as much effort and creativity into the comics as I seemed to be putting into my other free-lance endeavors. The fact is, I had always thought of my comic-book work as a temporary job—even after all those years—and her little dissertation made me suddenly realize that it was time to start concentrating on what I was doing—to carve a real career for myself in the nowhere world of comic books.

No sooner had the lovely Mrs. Lee filled me with rabid resolution than I had another talk, this time with Martin Goodman. Martin was my publisher, my friend, and my cousin-in-law . . . not necessarily in that order. He was also easily the best businessman, the cleverest editor, and the canniest publisher I've ever known. I suspect he'd have been a triple-threat writer as well had he been so inclined. However, Martin published a number of other types of magazines as well as comic books, and devoted most of his time to the so-called "slicks" while I was pretty much on my own with the comics. I never knew if it was because he had unbounded confidence in me, or because he didn't think comics had much future.

Be that as it may, Martin mentioned that he had noticed one of the titles published by National Comics seemed to be selling better than most. It was a book called *The Justice League of America* and was composed of a team of superheroes. Well, we didn't need a house to fall on us. "If *The Justice League* is selling," spake he, "why don't we put out a comic book that features a team of superheroes?"

His logic was irrefutable. Besides, I was tired of doing those countless monster mags. And Joan wanted me to bear down and make something of myself in the comic-book field. The timing was perfect. The elements were all at hand. Kismet.

It was natural for me to choose Jack Kirby to draw the new superhero book that we would soon produce. Jack had probably drawn more superhero strips than any other artist and he was as good as they come. We had worked together for years, on all types of strips and stories. Most importantly, we had a uniquely successful method of working. I had only to give Jack an outline of a story and he would

draw the entire strip, breaking down the outline into exactly the right number of panels replete with action and drama. Then, it remained for me to take Jack's artwork and add the captions and dialogue, which would, hopefully, add the dimension of reality through sharply delineated characterization.

Ah, but this was not to be merely another of the hundreds of comic-strip features I had concocted in my long and lachrymose career. No, this was to be something different—something special—something to stupefy my publisher, startle my public, and satisfy my wife's desire for me to "prove myself" in my own little sphere.

True, I would create a team of superheroes if that was what the marketplace required. But it would be a team such as comicdom had never known. For just this once, I would do the type of story I myself would enjoy reading if I were a comic-book reader. And the characters would be the kind of characters I could personally relate to; they'd be flesh and blood, they'd have their faults and foibles, they'd be fallible and feisty, and—most important of all—inside their colorful, costumed booties they'd still have feet of clay.

The more I thought about it, the more the concept grabbed me. All that remained was to dream up the characters, to create a team that meshed together. The first thing that came to mind was love interest. For the first time we'd have a hero and a heroine who were actually engaged. No more coy suggestions that she'd really dig the guy if only she knew his true identity. And, speaking of identities, I was utterly determined to have a superhero series without any secret identities. I knew for a fact that if I myself possessed a super power I'd never keep it secret. I'm too much of a show-off. So why should our fictional friends be any different? Accepting this premise, it was also natural to decide to forgo the use of costumes. If our heroes were to live in the real world, then let them dress like real people.

Little by little it all took shape. We'd have the leader of the team and his lady love. She'd have a kid brother whom the readers could empathize with—but not too young. One of my many pet peeves has always been the young teenage sidekick of the average superhero. Once again, if yours truly were a superhero there's no way I'd pal around with some freckle-faced teenager. At the very least, people would start to talk. Anyway, I felt there should be one more member of our still-nameless ménage—one character who was to be included for drama, for pathos, for color, and for the sheer offbeat quality he

could provide. He'd be the most unlikely hero of all—ugly, morose, and totally antisocial—possessed of brute strength and a hair-trigger temper. He just had to become the most popular one of all.

After kicking it around with Martin and Jack for a while I decided to call our quaint quartet The Fantastic Four. I wrote a detailed first synopsis for Jack to follow, and the rest is history.

Now then, a few explanatory notes to the artwork you are soon to breathlessly behold. The origin of The Fantastic Four was conceived and produced in 1961. It was merely the first of an unbroken line of monthly releases that were to develop and grow and improve with each subsequent issue. Actually, the in-depth characterization that was destined to become a Marvel trademark was only hinted at in this, the opening strip. In the months that followed, the artwork grew progressively slicker, far more illustrative and carefully detailed. The characters became more sharply defined, and the touches of satire that Marvel introduced into the superhero genre grew more and more apparent.

But even in the first, rather primitive appearance of The Fantastic Four, you're certain to see evidence of the unique quality, the imaginative interpretation, and the stylistic departure from all the superhero strips which had gone before it.

So read on, O True Believer. May this small but salient slice of living history now serve to nourish thine awestruck, hungry eyes.

IND.
THE Fantastic FOUR
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
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I--I CAN'T TURN INVISIBLE FAST ENOUGH!! HOW CAN WE STOP THIS CREATURE, TORCH?
JUST WAIT AND SEE, SISTER! THE FANTASTIC FOUR HAVE ONLY BEGUN TO FIGHT!
FEATURING:
"THE THING!"
"MR. FANTASTIC!"
"HUMAN TORCH!"
"INVISIBLE GIRL!"
TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ONE MIGHTY MAGAZINE!
THE THREE OF YOU CAN'T DO IT ALONE! IT'S TIME FOR THE THING TO TAKE A HAND!
IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN ROPES TO KEEP MISTER FANTASTIC OUT OF ACTION!

THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

WITH THE SUDDEN FURY OF A THUNDERBOLT, A FLARE IS SHOT INTO THE SKY OVER CENTRAL CITY! THREE AWESOME WORDS TAKE FORM AS IF BY MAGIC, AND A LEGEND IS BORN!!

LOOK! IN THE SKY-- WHAT IN BLAZES DOES IT MEAN?
I DUNNO, BUT THE CROWDS ARE GETTIN' PANICKY!
RUMORS ARE FLYIN' ABOUT AN ALIEN INVASION!

ABOVE ALL THE HUBBUB AND EXCITEMENT, ONE STRANGE FIGURE HOLDS A STILL-SMOKING FLARE GUN! ONE STRANGE MAN WHO IS SOMEHOW **MORE** THAN JUST A MAN--FOR HE IS THE LEADER OF... THE FANTASTIC FOUR!

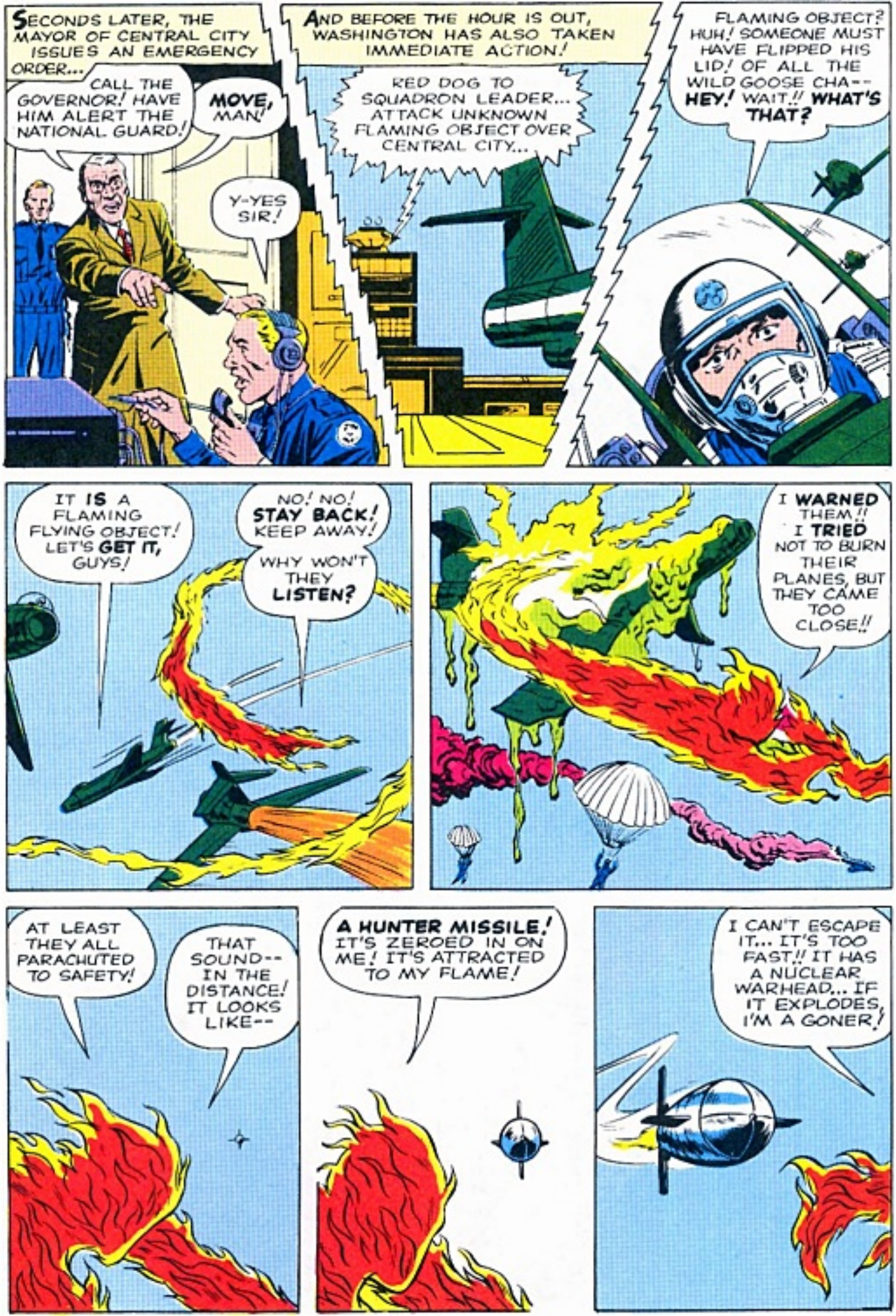
IN ANOTHER PART OF TOWN, SUSAN STORM IS HAVING TEA WITH A SOCIETY FRIEND, WHEN SHE HEARS THE OMINOUS WORDS...
SUSAN...LOOK! THOSE WORDS IN THE SKY! WHAT DO THEY MEAN?
SO IT HAS HAPPENED AT LAST! I MUST BE TRUE TO MY VOW!
THERE CAN BE NO TURNING BACK!
SUSAN!! SHE--SHE'S GONE! BUT WHERE? HOW?
IT IS TIME FOR THE WORLD TO MEET... THE INVISIBLE GIRL!
HEY! WHAT'S GOIN' ON?
SOME--SOMETHING RUSHED PAST ME! SOMETHING UNSEEN!
STAND ASIDE! I HAVE NO TIME TO LOSE!
IT--IT'S A GHOST!
JUST WHAT I NEED... AN EMPTY CAB!
BOY, WHAT A DULL DAY!
I MIGHT AS WELL CRUISE AROUND UNTIL I PICK ME UP A FARE!
THANK YOU! I WILL GET OUT HERE!
OKAY...
HUH?!! WAIT-- WHO SAID THAT?? WHA--??

DON'T JUST SIT THERE GAPING, MAN! TAKE YOUR MONEY!
I--I'M HEARIN' THINGS! SEEIN' THINGS! OR-OR NOT SEEIN' THEM!!
GANGWAY! I'M GETTIN' OUT OF HERE!
IT WORKS! I REALLY AM INVISIBLE! COMPLETELY, TOTALLY INVISIBLE! THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT! NOW, ALL THAT REMAINS IS... MY MISSION!
BUT LET US LEAVE THE AMAZING INVISIBLE GIRL AND TURN OUR ATTENTION TO A MEN'S CLOTHING STORE, IN ANOTHER PART OF TOWN...
I'M SORRY, MISTER, I JUST DON'T CARRY ANYTHING BIG ENOUGH TO FIT A MAN YOUR SIZE!
BAH! EVERYWHERE IT IS THE SAME! I LIVE IN A WORLD TOO SMALL FOR ME!
LOOK! OUT THE WINDOW IN THE SKY!
THOSE WORDS... "THE FANTASTIC FOUR"! WHAT CAN THEY MEAN?
SO! THE TIME HAS COME!
WAIT, DON'T BOTHER TAKING OFF YOUR COAT... I TOLD YOU WE HAVEN'T ANYTHING IN YOUR SIZE...
YOUR--YOUR-- SIZE...
OH NO...
WHAT A RELIEF TO GET RID OF THOSE TIGHT RAGS!

WHY MUST THEY BUILD DOORWAYS SO NARROW?
HOLY SMOKE!! A--A--MONSTER!
PETE, LOOK! WHAT'S THAT?
I DUNNO... BUT I AIN'T TAKIN' ANY CHANCES WITH IT!
HALT!! HALT OR I'LL SHOOT!!
OKAY, I WARNED YOU!
HIS FIRST SHOT MISSED BECAUSE HE WAS SO NERVOUS! BUT HE'LL NOT GET ANOTHER CHANCE!
DID YOU SEE THAT? HE RIPPED THE MANHOLE COVER OUT OF THE GROUND WITH HIS BARE HANDS!
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
I HAVE GONE FAR ENOUGH! I SHOULD BE UNDER MY DESTINATION BY NOW! BUT THERE IS NO MANHOLE ABOVE ME-- NO OPENING!
BAH! I CANNOT DELAY! I'LL MAKE AN OPENING!

WHAT IS THAT... RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME?? OH, NO... IT'S ALIVE!!
FOOL! DID YOU NOT SEE ME IN TIME?
IT'S A WALKING NIGHTMARE!! HELP!! HELP!!
LILY-LIVERED COWARDS!
IT AIN'T HUMAN! IT'S TOO BIG... TOO STRONG!! IT--IT'S A MARTIAN!
MINUTES LATER, THE POLICE RIOT SQUAD REACHES THE SCENE...
THERE'S NO ONE HERE!
STREET'S DESERTED!
THEN WHO PUT IN THAT DANGER CALL?
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO EXPLAIN IT, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING WEIRD HAPPENING IN CENTRAL CITY! THOSE WORDS IN THE SKY... THOSE SCATTERED REPORTS OF MONSTERS WALKING THE STREETS...
BUT WHAT DOES IT ADD UP TO, CHIEF? ...WHAT?
WHAT DOES IT ADD UP TO, INDEED? PERHAPS IF THE POLICE OFFICERS COULD WITNESS STILL ANOTHER SCENE IN A LOCAL SERVICE STATION, THEY WOULD FIND YET ANOTHER CLUE--AS WILL WE!
WE GOT HER PURRIN' GENTLE AS A LAMB, JOHNNY!
GOOD! THAT'S THE WAY I LIKE HER!
THERE'S ONLY ONE THING IN THE WORLD THAT INTERESTS ME MORE THAN CARS!
YEAH? WHAT'S THAT, JOHNNY?

HEY, JOHNNY... LOOK!! IN THE SKY!! THOSE WORDS! THEY'RE ALL COMIN' TOGETHER! THEY'RE TURNIN' INTO A NUMBER! THE NUMBER... FOUR!
JOHNNY! THAT HEAT! WHERE'S IT COMIN' FROM? WHA--? WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOU?
DON'T WORRY, PAL!
YOU'RE TURNIN' INTO... GASP A--A HUMAN TORCH!
REMEMBER ME SAYING THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING I CARE ABOUT MORE THAN CARS?
WELL, THIS IS IT!!
!
IMPOSSIBLE? INCREDIBLE? CALL IT WHAT YOU WILL, BUT THE FIGURE WHICH HAD BEEN JOHNNY STORM, SCANT SECONDS BEFORE, IS NOW A CAREENING HUMAN TORCH, FLASHING THRU THE SKIES ABOVE LIKE A FLAMING METEOR!
LOOK! A BLAZING, BURNING COMET!
NO!! IT'S NOT A COMET!! IT'S-- IT'S--
UNLESS WE'RE GOING MAD--IT'S SOMETHING HUMAN!


SECONDS LATER, THE MAYOR OF CENTRAL CITY ISSUES AN EMERGENCY ORDER...
CALL THE GOVERNOR! HAVE HIM ALERT THE NATIONAL GUARD!
MOVE, MAN!
Y-YES SIR!
AND BEFORE THE HOUR IS OUT, WASHINGTON HAS ALSO TAKEN IMMEDIATE ACTION!
RED DOG TO SQUADRON LEADER... ATTACK UNKNOWN FLAMING OBJECT OVER CENTRAL CITY...
FLAMING OBJECT? HUH! SOMEONE MUST HAVE FLIPPED HIS LID! OF ALL THE WILD GOOSE CHA-- HEY! WAIT!! WHAT'S THAT?
IT IS A FLAMING FLYING OBJECT! LET'S GET IT, GUYS!
NO! NO! STAY BACK! KEEP AWAY!
WHY WON'T THEY LISTEN?
I WARNED THEM!! I TRIED NOT TO BURN THEIR PLANES, BUT THEY CAME TOO CLOSE!!
AT LEAST THEY ALL PARACHUTED TO SAFETY!
THAT SOUND-- IN THE DISTANCE! IT LOOKS LIKE--
A HUNTER MISSILE! IT'S ZEROED IN ON ME! IT'S ATTRACTED TO MY FLAME!
I CAN'T ESCAPE IT... IT'S TOO FAST!! IT HAS A NUCLEAR WARHEAD... IF IT EXPLODES, I'M A GONER!

SUDDENLY, THE HUMAN TORCH'S FLAME BEGINS TO DIMINISH... AND, AS THE MISSILE IS ABOUT TO STRIKE HIM, TWO IMPOSSIBLY LONG ARMS REACH ABOVE THE ROOF-TOPS, AND...

GOT IT!!

MOVING WITH DAZZLING SPEED, ONE OF THE INCREDIBLE ARMS HURLS THE MIGHTY MISSILE FAR FROM SHORE, WHERE IT EXPLODES HARMLESSLY OVER THE SEA!

BUT, AS THE FLYING BOY'S FLAME FLICKERS OUT ALTOGETHER, HE BEGINS TO PLUMMET TOWARD EARTH... TOWARD A CERTAIN DOOM!

GRAB ME, JOHNNY BOY!! THAT'S IT!!

WHO **IS** THIS UNBELIEVABLE STRANGER WHO HAS SAVED THE HUMAN TORCH?

YOU'RE SAFE NOW, LAD! YOU'RE SAFE!

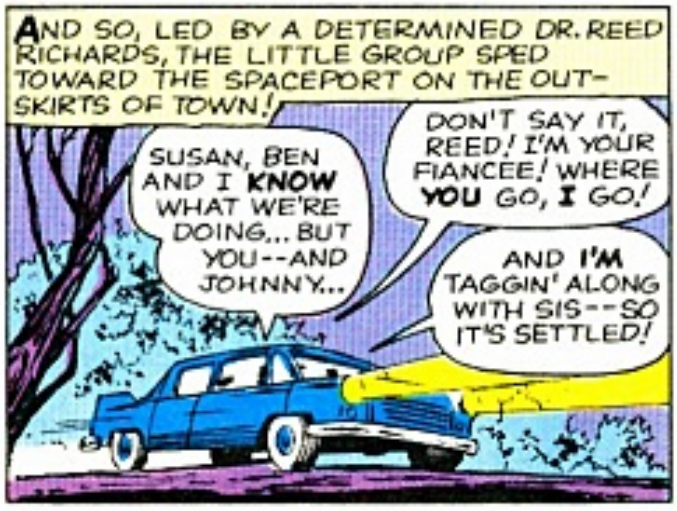
IN FACT, WHO ARE **ALL FOUR** OF THESE STRANGE AND ASTONISHING HUMANS? HOW DID THEY BECOME WHAT THEY ARE? WHAT MYSTIC QUIRK OF FATE BROUGHT THEM TOGETHER, TO FORM THE AWE-INSPIRING GROUP KNOWN AS **THE FANTASTIC FOUR??**

YOU ALL HEEDED MY SUMMONS!! GOOD!! THERE IS A TASK THAT AWAITS US... A FEARFUL TASK!

BUT, THERE IS TIME ENOUGH TO LEARN OF THE TASK WHICH FACES THE FANTASTIC FOUR! FIRST, LET US DISCOVER MORE ABOUT THEIR ORIGIN--LET US GO BACK TO THAT MOMENTOUS DAY WHEN AN ANGRY BEN GRIMM CONFRONTED DR. REED RICHARDS...
IF YOU WANT TO FLY TO THE STARS, THEN YOU PILOT THE SHIP! COUNT ME OUT!
YOU KNOW WE HAVEN'T DONE ENOUGH RESEARCH INTO THE EFFECT OF COSMIC RAYS! THEY MIGHT KILL US ALL OUT IN SPACE!

BEN, WE'VE GOT TO TAKE THAT CHANCE... UNLESS WE WANT THE COMMIES TO BEAT US TO IT!
I--I NEVER THOUGHT THAT YOU WOULD BE A COWARD!

A COWARD!! NOBODY CALLS ME A COWARD! GET THE SHIP! I'LL FLY HER NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS!!

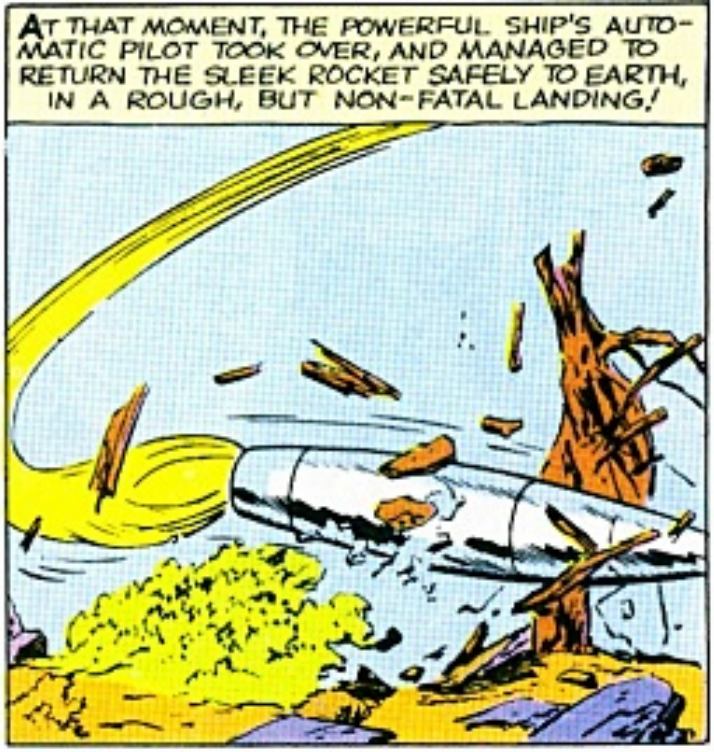

AND SO, LED BY A DETERMINED DR. REED RICHARDS, THE LITTLE GROUP SPED TOWARD THE SPACEPORT ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN!
SUSAN, BEN AND I KNOW WHAT WE'RE DOING... BUT YOU--AND JOHNNY...
DON'T SAY IT, REED! I'M YOUR FIANCEE! WHERE YOU GO, I GO!
AND I'M TAGGIN' ALONG WITH SIS--SO IT'S SETTLED!

NO TIME TO WAIT FOR OFFICIAL CLEARANCE! CONDITIONS ARE RIGHT TONIGHT! LET'S GO!

BEFORE THE GUARD CAN STOP THEM, THE MIGHTY SHIP WHICH REED RICHARDS HAD SPENT YEARS CONSTRUCTING IS SOARING INTO THE HEAVENS...TOWARDS OUTER SPACE!

SHE'S BEHAVING LIKE A BABY! EVERYTHING IS PERFECT!
YEAH, EXCEPT THE COSMIC RAYS! NO ONE KNOWS WHAT THEY'LL DO...

HIGHER AND HIGHER, LIKE A SILVER BULLET, ROARS THE SLEEK SPACE CRAFT...
WE HAD TO DO IT!! WE HAD TO BE THE FIRST!
BUT WE'RE REACHING THE COSMIC STORM AREA... HANG ON!
RAK TAC TAC TAC TAC
HEAR THAT?? IT'S THE COSMIC RAYS!! I--I WARNED YOU ABOUT 'EM!!
THEY'RE PENETRATING THE SHIP!! OUR SHIELDING ISN'T STRONG ENOUGH!
BUT I DON'T FEEL ANYTHING!
NATURALLY! THEY'RE ONLY RAYS OF LIGHT! YOU CAN'T FEEL 'EM-- BUT THEY'LL AFFECT YOU JUST THE SAME!
MY HEAD!! IT--IT'S POUNDING AS THOUGH IT'S ABOUT TO BURST!!
BEN WAS RIGHT!! WE SHOULD HAVE WAITED... SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN HEAVIER SHIELDING!
JOHNNY! WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOU?
I DON'T KNOW, SIS! MY BODY FEELS HOT-- LIKE IT'S ON FIRE!! I-I FEEL LIKE I'M BURNING UP!!
UGH!! LISTEN TO ME...
...SOMEBODY ELSE TAKE THE CONTROLS... I CAN'T HANDLE THE SHIP ANY MORE! MY-- MY ARMS ARE HEAVY--TOO HEAVY--CAN'T MOVE--TOO HEAVY--GOT TO LIE DOWN-- CAN'T MOVE!!
BEN!

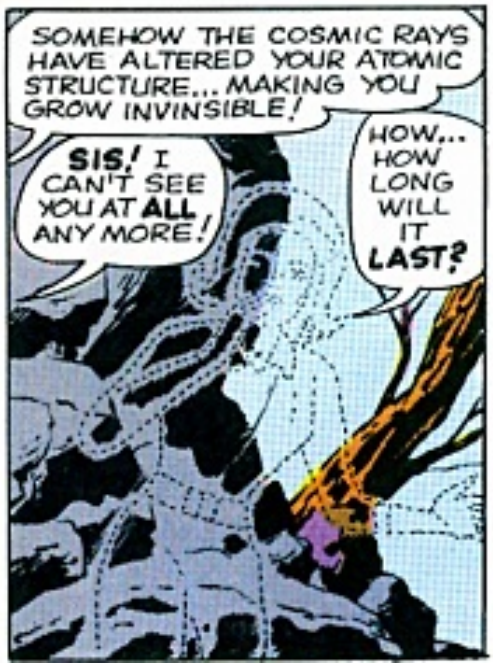

AT THAT MOMENT, THE POWERFUL SHIP'S AUTOMATIC PILOT TOOK OVER, AND MANAGED TO RETURN THE SLEEK ROCKET SAFELY TO EARTH, IN A ROUGH, BUT NON-FATAL LANDING!

I--I'M GRATEFUL WE'RE ALL ALIVE!! IT WAS MIGHTY CLOSE!
BUT, REED...WE FAILED!! AFTER ALL YOUR WORK... YOUR DEDICATION... WE FAILED!
BAH! WHAT'D YOU EXPECT?

BUT WE'RE STILL NOT COMPLETELY SAFE! WE STILL HAVE TO SEE WHETHER THE COSMIC RAYS AFFECTED US IN ANY WAY!
OH, REED... I FEEL SO STRANGE!

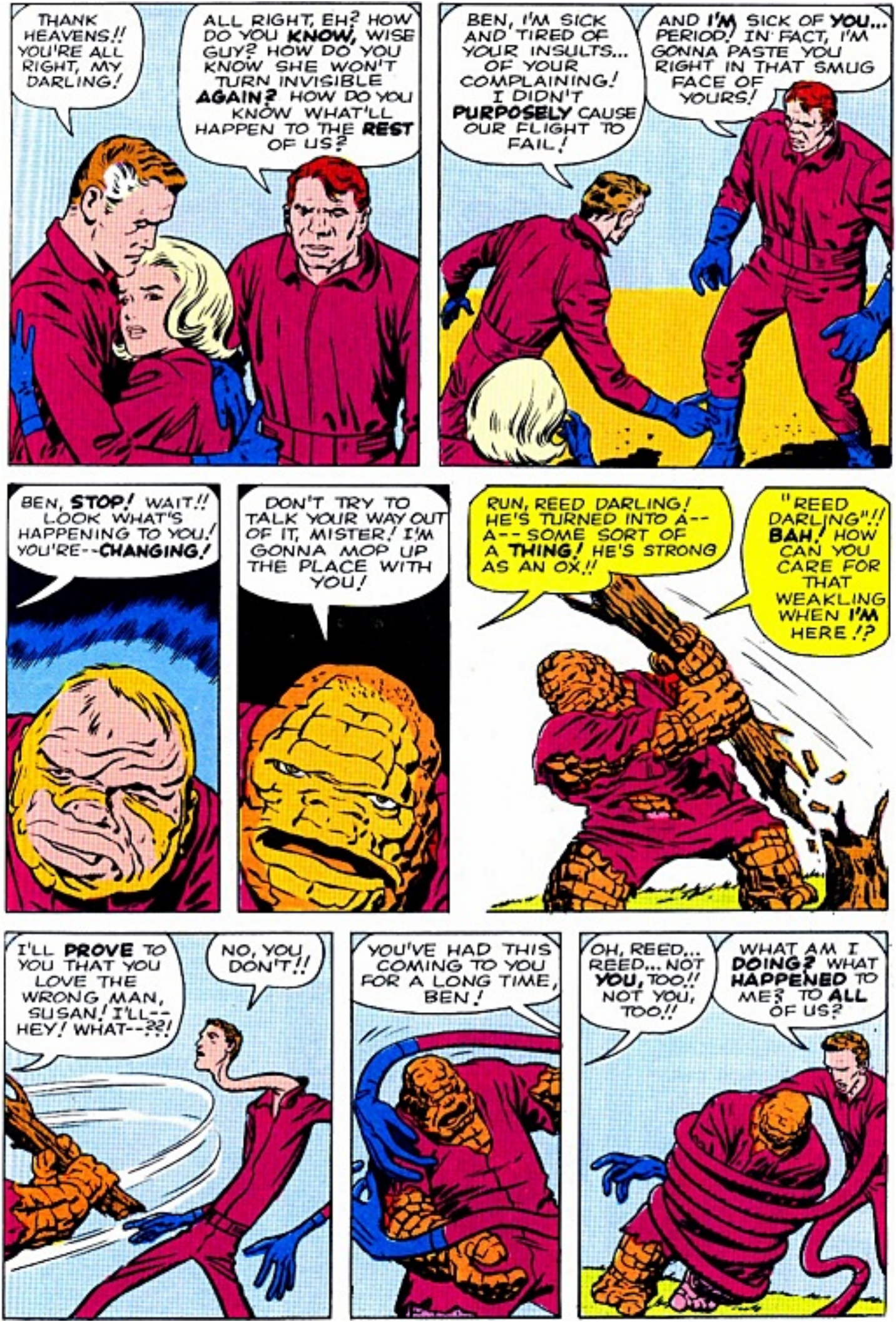
SUSAN! LOOK AT SUSAN!!
WHAT'S WRONG?

YOU'RE GASP FADING AWAY!!
OH, NO!! NO!!
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!


SOMEHOW THE COSMIC RAYS HAVE ALTERED YOUR ATOMIC STRUCTURE... MAKING YOU GROW INVINSIBLE!
SIS! I CAN'T SEE YOU AT ALL ANY MORE!
HOW... HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

THERE'S NO WAY OF KNOWING!!
WHA--WHAT IF SHE NEVER GETS VISIBLE AGAIN??

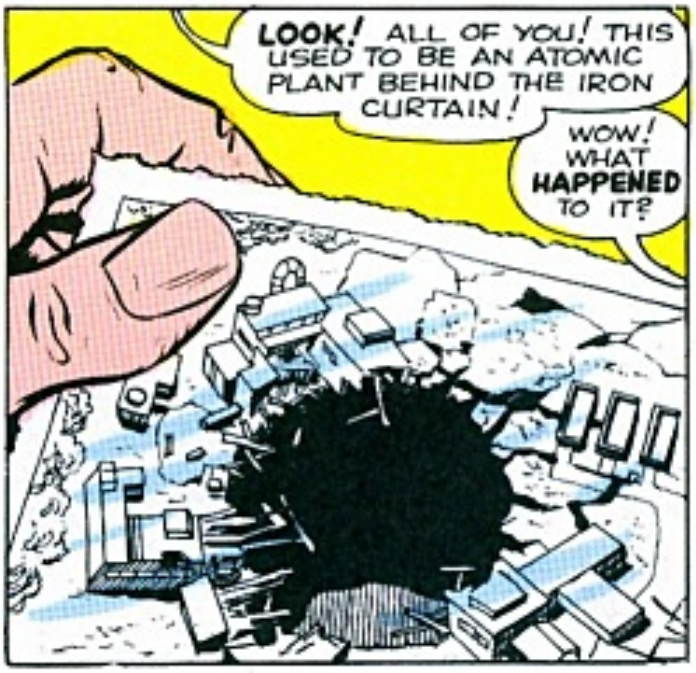
LOOK!! I SEE HER!
I'M MYSELF AGAIN! IT HAPPENED SO SUDDENLY... ALL BY ITSELF!


THANK HEAVENS!! YOU'RE ALL RIGHT, MY DARLING!
ALL RIGHT, EH? HOW DO YOU KNOW, WISE GUY? HOW DO YOU KNOW SHE WON'T TURN INVISIBLE AGAIN? HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT'LL HAPPEN TO THE REST OF US?
BEN, I'M SICK AND TIRED OF YOUR INSULTS... OF YOUR COMPLAINING! I DIDN'T PURPOSELY CAUSE OUR FLIGHT TO FAIL!
AND I'M SICK OF YOU... PERIOD! IN FACT, I'M GONNA PASTE YOU RIGHT IN THAT SMUG FACE OF YOURS!
BEN, STOP! WAIT!! LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOU! YOU'RE--CHANGING!
DON'T TRY TO TALK YOUR WAY OUT OF IT, MISTER! I'M GONNA MOP UP THE PLACE WITH YOU!
RUN, REED DARLING! HE'S TURNED INTO A-- A-- SOME SORT OF A THING! HE'S STRONG AS AN OX!!
"REED DARLING"!! BAH! HOW CAN YOU CARE FOR THAT WEAKLING WHEN I'M HERE!?
I'LL PROVE TO YOU THAT YOU LOVE THE WRONG MAN, SUSAN! I'LL-- HEY! WHAT--??!
NO, YOU DON'T!!
YOU'VE HAD THIS COMING TO YOU FOR A LONG TIME, BEN!
OH, REED... REED... NOT YOU, TOO!! NOT YOU, TOO!!
WHAT AM I DOING? WHAT HAPPENED TO ME? TO ALL OF US?

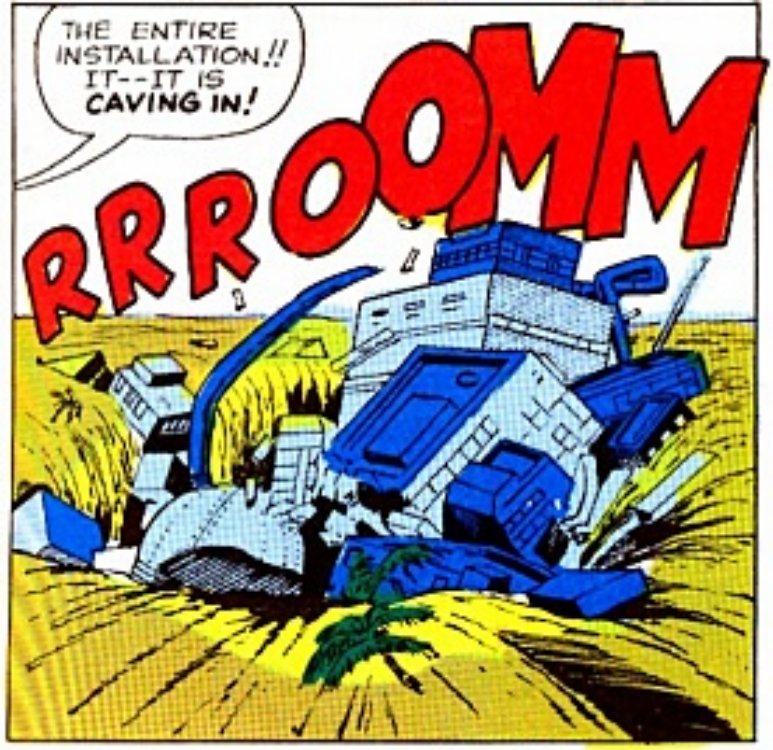
YOU'VE TURNED INTO MONSTERS... BOTH OF YOU!! IT'S THOSE RAYS! THOSE TERRIBLE COSMIC RAYS!
NOW I KNOW WHY I'VE BEEN FEELING SO WARM! LOOK AT ME!! THEY'VE AFFECTED ME, TOO! WHEN I GET EXCITED I CAN FEEL MY BODY BEGIN TO BLAZE!
I'M LIGHTER THAN AIR!! I CAN FLY!! LOOK... I CAN FLY!!
MINUTES LATER, JOHNNY STORM'S FLAME SUBSIDED AND HE LANDED NEAR THE OTHER THREE! SILENTLY THEY WATCHED THE SMALL FIRE HE HAD STARTED IN THE UNDERBRUSH BURN ITSELF OUT!! SILENTLY THEY WERE EACH OCCUPIED WITH THEIR OWN STARTLING THOUGHTS!
WE'VE CHANGED! ALL OF US! WE'RE MORE THAN JUST HUMAN!
LISTEN TO ME, ALL OF YOU! THAT MEANS YOU TOO, BEN! TOGETHER WE HAVE MORE POWER THAN ANY HUMANS HAVE EVER POSSESSED!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO MAKE A SPEECH, BIG SHOT! WE UNDERSTAND! WE'VE GOTTA USE THAT POWER TO HELP MANKIND, RIGHT?
RIGHT, BEN, RIGHT!
I'M CALLING MYSELF THE HUMAN TORCH-- AND I'M WITH YOU ALL THE WAY!
SAME GOES FOR ME... THE INVISIBLE GIRL!
THERE'S ONLY ONE STILL MISSING... BEN!!
I AIN'T BEN ANYMORE-- I'M WHAT SUSAN CALLED ME-- THE THING!!
AND I'LL CALL MYSELF... MISTER FANTASTIC!!
AND SO WAS BORN "THE FANTASTIC FOUR!!" AND FROM THAT MOMENT ON, THE WORLD WOULD NEVER AGAIN BE THE SAME!!

THE FANTASTIC FOUR MEET THE MOLE MAN!

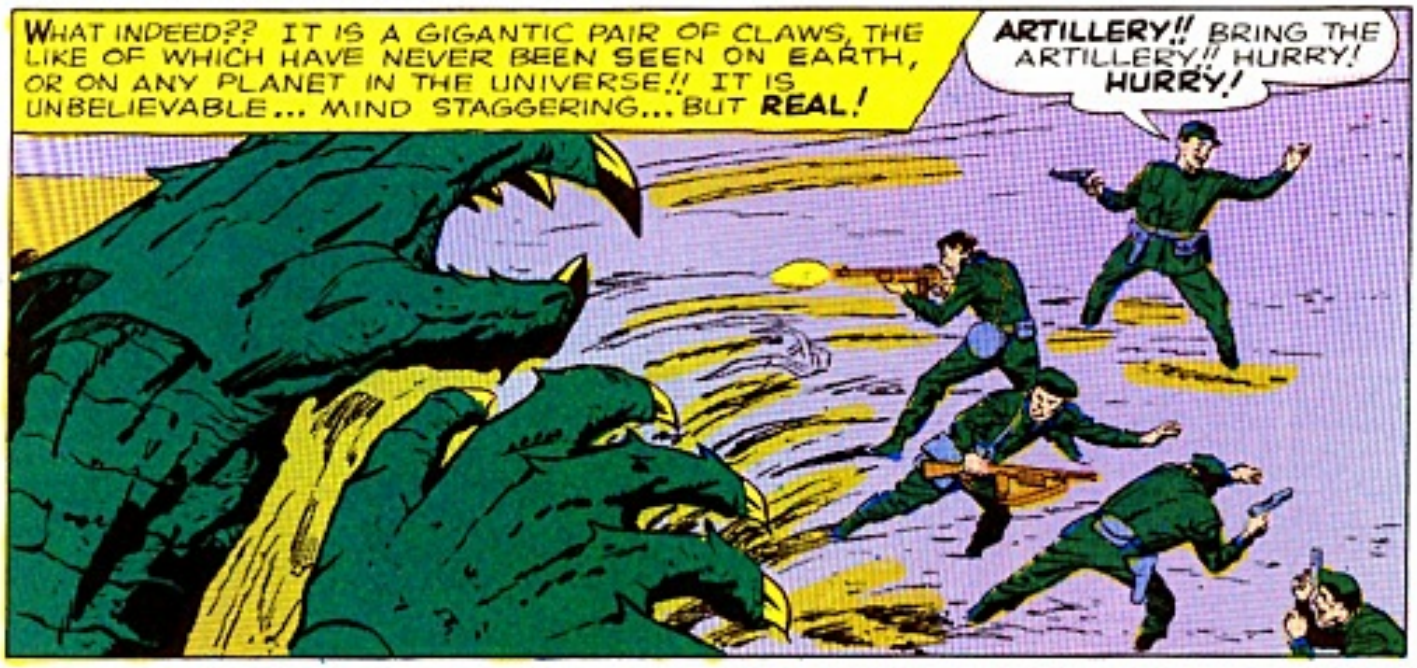
AND NOW, HAVING MET OUR FOUR AMAZING CHARACTERS, LET US RESUME OUR TALE...
I CALLED YOU TOGETHER BECAUSE I HAVE SOME PICTURES TO SHOW YOU!
PICTURES?
WHAT ARE THEY... PIN-UPS?



THE SAME THING THAT HAPPENED TO THE OTHER ATOMIC PLANTS ON THOSE PHOTOS!
THIS ONE IS IN AUSTRALIA!
AND THIS IS IN SOUTH AMERICA!
THAT'S JUST IT! IT'S HAPPENING TO ATOMIC PLANTS ALL OVER THE WORLD! NO ONE KNOWS HOW--OR WHY!
WAIT!! ACCORDING TO THE STEADY IMPULSES ON MY RADAR MACHINE, ANOTHER CAVE-IN IS ABOUT DUE TO TAKE PLACE!!
AND, EVEN AS REED RICHARDS SPEAKS, HALF-WAY AROUND THE WORLD, IN FRENCH AFRICA, THE FOLLOWING SCENE IS TAKING PLACE...
WHAT IS WRONG, PIERRE?
I DO NOT KNOW! IT SOUNDS IN-SANE, BUT THE SAND BENEATH MY FEET SEEMS TO BE THROBBING!
...ALMOST AS IF SOMETHING IS MOVING BELOW US! ALMOST AS IF... LISTEN! DON'T YOU FEEL IT??
RUMBLE RUMBLE
HELP!!
RUMBLE ROAR
IT IS AN EARTHQUAKE! BUT HERE IN THE DESERT?? IMPOSSIBLE!!
IMPOSSIBLE OR NOT, PIERRE ALMOST FELL TO HIS DOOM!
WAIT!! THE GROUND IS TREMBLING AGAIN!! WHAT CAN IT BE??
SACRE BLEU!! THE EARTH IS GOING MAD!!
ROOOOOMM


THE ENTIRE INSTALLATION!! IT--IT IS CAVING IN!
RRROOMM

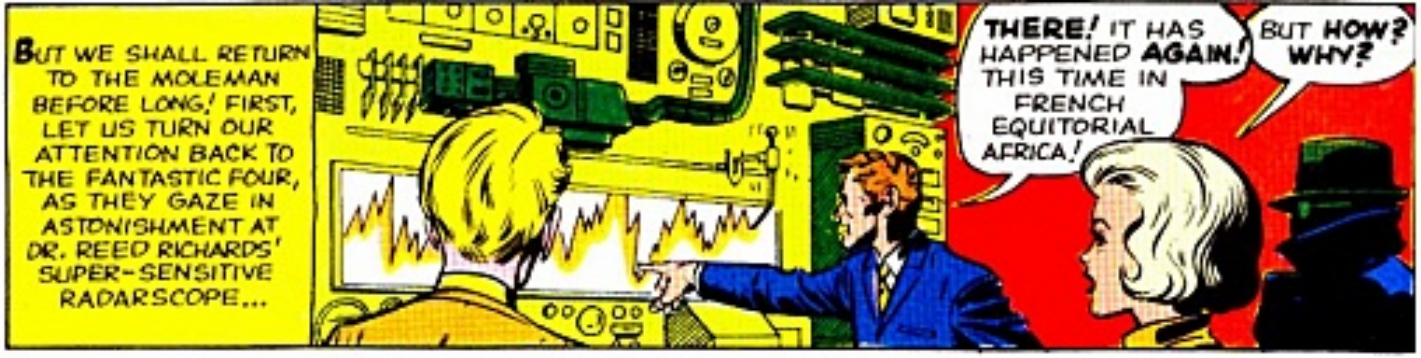
BUT THE WORST IS YET TO COME!! FOR, LESS THAN THIRTY SECONDS LATER...
IN THE NAME OF HEAVEN!!
WHAT IS THAT?

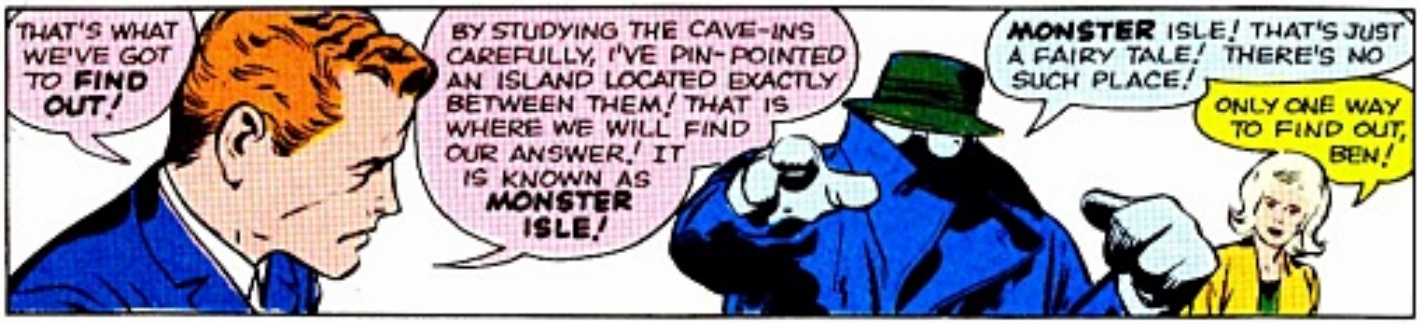

WHAT INDEED?? IT IS A GIGANTIC PAIR OF CLAWS, THE LIKE OF WHICH HAVE NEVER BEEN SEEN ON EARTH, OR ON ANY PLANET IN THE UNIVERSE!! IT IS UNBELIEVABLE... MIND STAGGERING... BUT REAL!
ARTILLERY!! BRING THE ARTILLERY!! HURRY! HURRY!

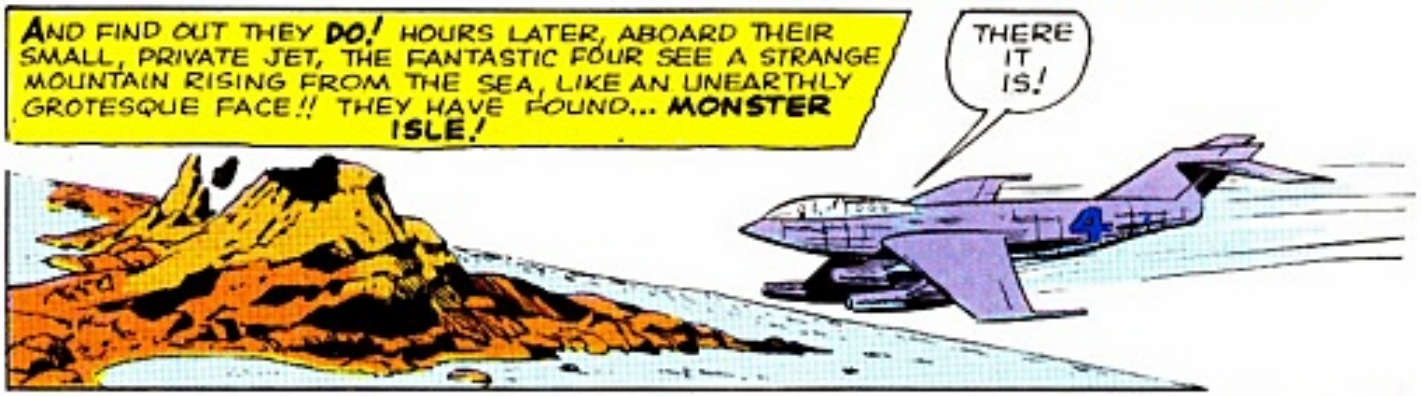
ARTILLERY! OF WHAT USE IS ARTILLERY AGAINST A CREATURE WHOSE HIDE IS POWERFUL ENOUGH TO DIG ITS WAY UP THRU COUNTLESS TONS OF ROCK-HARD EARTH??

ARTILLERY! OF WHAT USE IS ARTILLERY AGAINST A MONSTER WHO CAN CRUSH A HEAVY TANK WITH ONE HAND??

BUT, JUST AS IT SEEMS THAT NOTHING IN THE WORLD WILL HALT THE NIGHTMARE MENACE, THE SHRILL SOUND OF A COMMANDING VOICE IS HEARD... AND THE GOLIATH STOPS IN ITS TRACKS!
ENOUGH! RETURN TO EARTH'S CORE! OUR MISSION HERE IS FINISHED! GO!!
FOR EVEN SUCH A MONSTER HEEDS ITS MASTER! A MASTER KNOWN AS... THE MOLEMAN!!


BUT WE SHALL RETURN TO THE MOLEMAN BEFORE LONG! FIRST, LET US TURN OUR ATTENTION BACK TO THE FANTASTIC FOUR, AS THEY GAZE IN ASTONISHMENT AT DR. REED RICHARDS' SUPER-SENSITIVE RADARSCOPE...
THERE! IT HAS HAPPENED AGAIN! THIS TIME IN FRENCH EQUITORIAL AFRICA!
BUT HOW? WHY?


THAT'S WHAT WE'VE GOT TO FIND OUT!
BY STUDYING THE CAVE-INS CAREFULLY, I'VE PIN-POINTED AN ISLAND LOCATED EXACTLY BETWEEN THEM! THAT IS WHERE WE WILL FIND OUR ANSWER! IT IS KNOWN AS MONSTER ISLE!
MONSTER ISLE! THAT'S JUST A FAIRY TALE! THERE'S NO SUCH PLACE!
ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT, BEN!


AND FIND OUT THEY DO! HOURS LATER, ABOARD THEIR SMALL, PRIVATE JET, THE FANTASTIC FOUR SEE A STRANGE MOUNTAIN RISING FROM THE SEA, LIKE AN UNEARTHLY GROTESQUE FACE!! THEY HAVE FOUND... MONSTER ISLE!
THERE IT IS!

LITTLE DREAMING WHAT AWAITS THEM, THEY CLIMB TO THE TOP OF THE FORBIDDING PEAK...
IF THIS IS JUST A WILD GOOSE CHASE, MISTER, I'LL MAKE SURE YOU LIVE TO REGRET IT!
SAVE YOUR BREATH FOR THE CLIMB, GRUESOME!

HOLD IT!! I HEAR SOMETHING!!
IT'S COMING FROM BELOW!

LOOK!! THOSE EYES...

SUDDENLY, A LIVING THREE-HEADED NIGHTMARE HURLS ITSELF AT THEM FROM OVER THE EDGE OF THE PEAK OF MONSTER ISLE!

QUICK, SUE! TURN INVISIBLE!
SEEING ONE OF ITS INTENDED VICTIMS VANISH BEFORE ITS EYES, THE MONSTER HALTS... BEWILDERED!!
THERE'S JUST TIME FOR ME TO BECOME MR. FANTASTIC AGAIN! I'LL MAKE A HUGE LASSO OUT OF MY ARM!
GOT 'IM!!
I HAD HEARD THERE WAS A GIANT THREE-HEADED CREATURE GUARDING THIS ISLE... BUT HE SHALL GUARD IT NO LONGER!!
BUT BEFORE MR. FANTASTIC AND THE HUMAN TORCH CAN CATCH THEIR BREATH...
LOOK OUT!!
IT'S A CAVE-IN!
HOLD ON, JOHNNY! HOLD ON!
GULP! LUCKY SUE AND BEN WEREN'T WITH US AT THE EDGE!

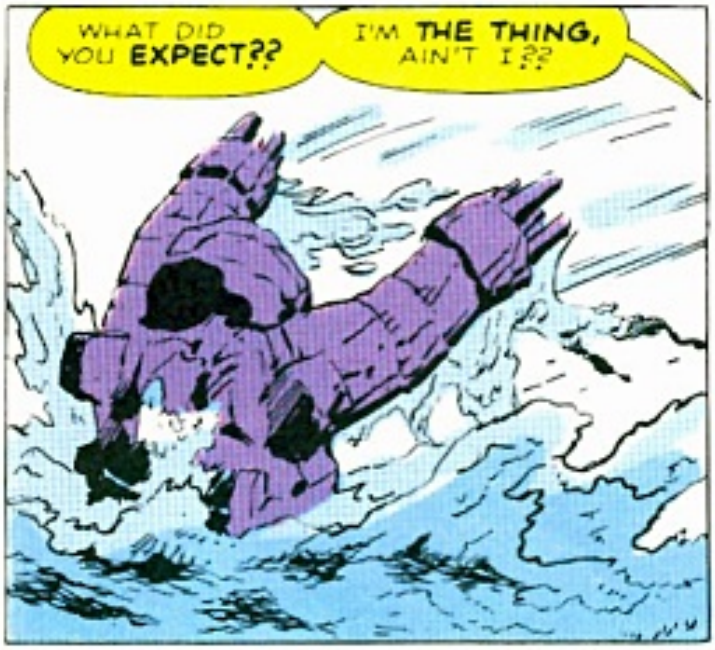
FINALLY, THE AMAZING DUO FLOAT DOWN TO THE BOTTOM OF THE PIT...
IT'S PITCH DARK!! WHAT SORT OF PLACE CAN IT BE?
REED! I FEEL SOME-THING!
IT'S A TRAP DOOR IN THE WALL!
IT'S MOVING!
THAT LIGHT!! WHERE DID IT COME FROM!
IT'S BLINDING! I CAN'T SEE!
I-I'M BLACKING OUT!
IT MIGHT BE MINUTES, OR HOURS LATER, WHEN THE TWO MEN REGAIN THEIR SENSES ONLY TO FIND THEMSELVES GARBED IN STRANGE, ADHESIVE-TYPE SUITS WHICH PROTECT THEM FROM THE BLINDING, UNEARTHLY GLOW!
MY HEAD!!
THE LIGHT--IT ACTUALLY CAUSED US TO LOSE CONSCIOUSNESS! BUT HOW DID WE GET INTO THESE SUITS?
SO, YOU HAVE RECOVERED, HAVE YOU!! IT IS ABOUT TIME!!
WHO--WHO ARE YOU? I CAN'T SEE...
AND WHERE ARE WE?
THE REASON YOU CANNOT SEE IS... YOU ARE BLINDED BY THE GLARE FROM--THE VALLEY OF DIAMONDS!!
--AND AS FOR ME--I AM THE MOLEMAN!!

THE MOLEMAN'S SECRET!

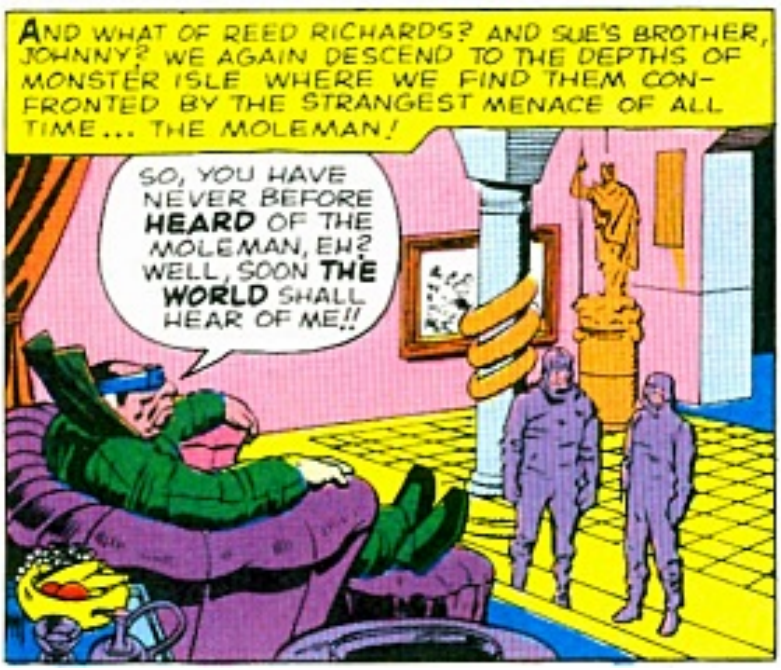
BEFORE WE WITNESS THE BREATH-TAKING CONCLUSION OF OUR AMAZING TALE, LET US GATHER TOGETHER ALL THE LOOSE ENDS! LET US RETURN TO THE TWO MEMBERS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR WHO DID NOT FALL BELOW DURING THE CAVE-IN...
REED... AND JOHNNY... GOT TO FIND THEM!!
WAIT! THAT NOISE--BEHIND ME!! WHAT--??

THE SECOND GIGANTIC GUARDIAN OF MONSTER ISLE IS POWERFUL BEYOND BELIEF... BUT HE IS FIGHTING AN ENEMY WHOSE EVERY ATOM HAS BEEN CHARGED WITH COSMIC RAYS... AN ENEMY WHO CAN'T BE STOPPED!

YOU'VE DONE IT, BEN! YOU'VE BEATEN HIM!


WHAT DID YOU EXPECT??
I'M THE THING, AIN'T I??

NOW LET'S GO AND FIND THAT SKINNY, LOUD-MOUTHED BOY-FRIEND OF YOURS!
OH, BEN--IF ONLY YOU COULD STOP HATING REED FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU!


AND WHAT OF REED RICHARDS? AND SUE'S BROTHER, JOHNNY? WE AGAIN DESCEND TO THE DEPTHS OF MONSTER ISLE WHERE WE FIND THEM CONFRONTED BY THE STRANGEST MENACE OF ALL TIME... THE MOLEMAN!
SO, YOU HAVE NEVER BEFORE HEARD OF THE MOLEMAN, EH? WELL, SOON THE WORLD SHALL HEAR OF ME!!

FOR SOON, THE MOLEMAN WILL HAVE THE ENTIRE WORLD IN HIS POWER!
HOW DID YOU GET HERE? WHAT IS THIS PLACE?

"IT ALL STARTED LONG AGO!! BECAUSE THE PEOPLE OF THE SURFACE WORLD MOCKED ME!"
WHAT? ME GO OUT WITH YOU? DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH!
I KNOW YOU'RE QUALIFIED, BUT YOU CAN'T WORK HERE! YOU'D SCARE OUR OTHER EMPLOYEES AWAY!
HEY, IS THAT YOUR FACE, OR ARE YOU WEARIN' A MASK? HAW HAW!
"FINALLY, I COULD STAND IT NO LONGER! I DECIDED TO STRIKE OUT ALONE...TO SEARCH FOR A NEW WORLD ...THE LEGENDARY LAND AT THE CENTER OF THE EARTH! A WORLD WHERE I COULD BE KING! MY TRAVELS TOOK ME ALL OVER THE GLOBE..."
EVEN THIS LONELINESS IS BETTER THAN THE CRUELTY OF MY FELLOW MEN!
"AND THEN, JUST WHEN I HAD ALMOST ABANDONED HOPE... WHEN MY LITTLE SKIFF HAD BEEN WASHED ASHORE HERE ON MONSTER ISLE, I FOUND IT!"
THAT STRANGE CAVERN! WHERE CAN IT LEAD TO?
"I SOON SAW WHERE IT LED... IT LED TO THE LAND OF MY DREAMS..."
DOWN THERE... BELOW-- I'VE FOUND IT!! IT'S EARTH'S CENTER!
"BUT IN THE DREAD SILENCE OF THAT HUGE CAVERN, THE SUDDEN SHOCK OF MY LOUD OUTCRY CAUSED A VIOLENT AVALANCHE, AND..."
"...WHEN IT WAS OVER, I HAD SOMEHOW MIRACULOUSLY SURVIVED THE FALL... BUT, DUE TO THE IMPACT OF THE CRASH, I HAD LOST MOST OF MY SIGHT! YES, I HAD FOUND THE CENTER OF EARTH--BUT I WAS STRANDED HERE... LIKE A HUMAN MOLE!!

THAT WAS TO BE THE LAST OF MY MISFORTUNES! MY LUCK BEGAN TO TURN IN MY FAVOR! I MASTERED THE CREATURES DOWN HERE-- MADE THEM DO MY BIDDING-- AND WITH THEIR HELP, I CARVED OUT AN UNDERGROUND EMPIRE!
A NOTE OF MADNESS CREEPS INTO THE MOLE'S VOICE AS HE SPEAKS OF HIS POWER! AND THEN, HE MAKES HIS FIRST FATAL MISTAKE...
I CONQUERED EVERYTHING ABOUT ME! I EVEN LEARNED TO SENSE THINGS IN THE DARK--LIKE A MOLE! HERE, I'LL SHOW YOU! TRY TO STRIKE ME WITH THAT POLE! TRY IT, I SAY!!
HAH! I SENSED THAT BLOW COMING! NOTHING CAN TAKE ME BY SURPRISE! AND, I HAVE DEVELOPED OTHER SENSES TOO, LIKE THOSE OF THE BAT--
I POSSESS A NATURAL RADAR SENSE... A WARNING SYSTEM WHICH ENABLES ME TO EVADE WHATEVER DANGER STRIKES AT ME!
COMPARED TO THE MOLE-MAN, YOU ARE SLOW... CLUMSY!! HAH HAH!!
SEE HOW EASILY I DEFEAT YOU... OR ANY OTHERS WHO TRY TO DEFY ME!
NOW, BEFORE I SLAY YOU ALL, BEHOLD MY MASTER PLAN! SEE THIS MAP OF MY UNDERGROUND EMPIRE! EACH TUNNEL LEADS TO A MAJOR CITY! AS SOON AS I HAVE WRECKED EVERY ATOMIC PLANT, EVERY SOURCE OF EARTHLY POWER, MY MIGHTY MOLE CREATURES WILL ATTACK AND DESTROY EVERYTHING THAT LIVES ABOVE THE SURFACE!
AND NOW, AT MY SIGNAL, THOSE CREATURES OF DARKNESS, MY DENIZENS OF EARTH'S CENTER, SHALL DISPOSE OF ALL OF YOU WITLESS INTRUDERS!
WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT, MOLE!!
THE THING!!

TOO LATE, FOOL! THE DIE IS CAST! THERE IS NO TURNING BACK!!
THING!! LOOK OUT... BEHIND YOU!
BONG! BONG!
HEARING THE MOLE'S SIGNAL, THE LARGEST AND MOST DEADLY OF HIS UNDERGROUND CREATURES PONDEROUSLY RAISES ITSELF INTO THE ROOM... ITS BRAINLESS RAGE DIRECTED AT THE FOUR ASTONISHED HUMANS!
AND THEN, THE FANTASTIC FOUR FLY INTO BLAZING ACTION...
LOOK OUT, REED! I'M GONNA BURN MY WAY OUTTA THIS MONKEY SUIT!
GOOD BOY, TORCH!
STAND ASIDE, GANG! IT'S GONNA GET MIGHTY WARM AROUND HERE!
BACK AND FORTH, BUZZING AROUND THE MONSTER'S HEAD LIKE A HORNET, FLIES THE HUMAN TORCH, AS THE GIGANTIC CREATURE VAINLY TRIES TO GRASP HIS FIERY FOE!
REED! THE MOLEMAN! HE'S ESCAPING!
NOT IF I CAN HELP IT, SUE!
AND HELP IT I CAN!

MOVING LIKE A WELL-OILED FIGHTING MACHINE, THE FANTASTIC FOUR, WITH THE DEADLY MOLEMAN IN THEIR GRASP, RACE FOR THE SURFACE... BUT THEN THEIR EVIL ANTAGONIST SEIZES THE SIGNAL CORD AGAIN, AND...
YOU HAVEN'T WON YET! EVEN YOU CAN'T DEFEAT ALL OF MY UNDER-EARTH HORDE!
HURRY, REED... HURRY!
CAN'T YOU EVEN HOLD ON TO ONE LITTLE GUY?
AND THEN THEY COME... LIKE FIGMENTS OF A MAD NIGHTMARE... ROARING, RUNNING, SNARLING... THE MOLEMAN'S ENTIRE ARMY OF UNDERGROUND GARGOYLES!!
BUT THEY HADN'T COUNTED ON THE UNBELIEVABLE POWER OF THE HUMAN TORCH! FLYING BETWEEN HIS FANTASTIC ALLIES, AND THE PURSUING HORDE, HE BLAZES A FIERY SWATH WHICH MELTS THE SOFT EARTH...
THIS WILL CAUSE A ROCKSLIDE, SEALING US OFF FROM THOSE CREATURES!
WE DID IT... WE'RE FREE!! AND THE ENTRANCE TO THE MOLEMAN'S EMPIRE IS SEALED FOREVER!
MOMENTS LATER...
BUT WHERE IS THE MOLEMAN?
I LEFT HIM BEHIND--HE'LL NEVER TROUBLE ANYONE AGAIN!
AND THE WORDS OF MR. FANTASTIC ARE INDEED PROPHETIC... AS, SECONDS LATER...
HE'S DESTROYED THE ENTIRE ISLE! HE'S SEALED HIMSELF BELOW--FOREVER!
IT'S BEST THAT WAY! THERE WAS NO PLACE FOR HIM IN OUR WORLD ...PERHAPS HE'LL FIND PEACE DOWN THERE... I HOPE SO!
I JUST HOPE WE HAVE SEEN THE LAST OF HIM!
BUT, WHETHER WE'VE SEEN THE LAST OF THE MOLEMAN OR NOT, WE WILL SEE MUCH MORE OF THE MOST AMAZING QUARTET IN HISTORY, IN THE NEXT GREAT ISSUE OF-- THE FANTASTIC FOUR!! DON'T MISS IT!!
THE END

In a noble effort to broaden your perspective and increase your appreciation of one of the subtler little miracles of the Marvel Age of Comics—namely, the fact that each subsequent strip somehow manages to be a little better than the previous one in both artwork and characterization—we shall generously present a more recent example of the genre following each practically priceless origin tale.

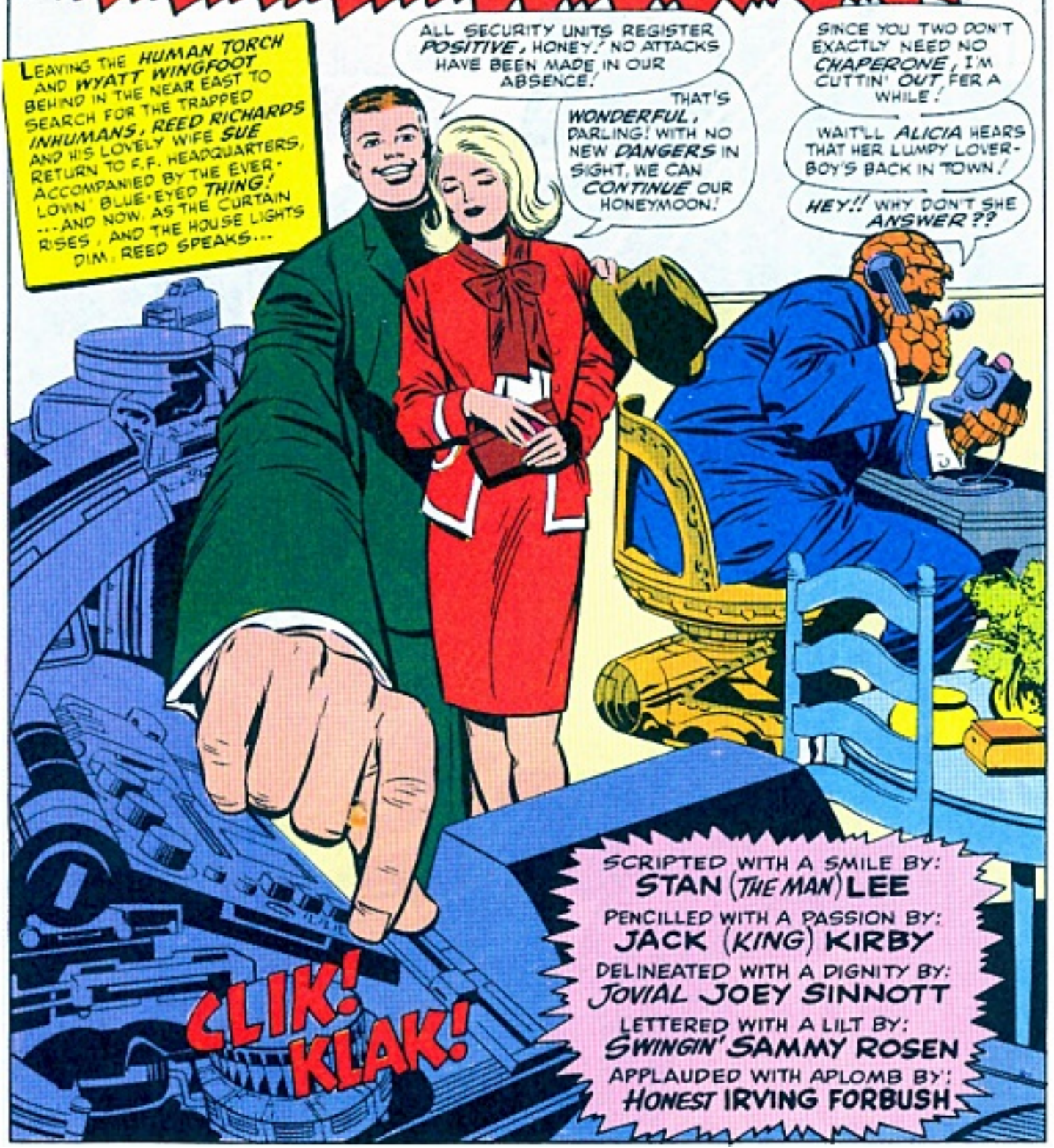
Your first such bountiful bonus is *Fantastic Four* #55, and you must ever bear in mind that fifty-four issues have come and gone since *FF* #1.

So we take you now to the year 1966 to see what a far wiser, wilier, and wearier bullpen is doing to what has become America's most popular team of superheroes. Ben Grimm has finally found his own true love in the person of Alicia Masters. An incredible race of beings called The Inhumans have entered the scene. Reed and Sue are now man and wife. The Human Torch has a valiant new Indian friend named Wyatt Wingfoot. And just wait till you see the indescribable Silver Surfer . . .

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
Fantastic Four
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
12¢ 55 OCT
FEATURING: THE PEERLESS POWER OF The SILVER SURFER!

SEE A RAGING, FIGHTING-MAD THING LEAP INTO ACTION...

"WHEN STRIKES THE SILVER SURFER!"


LEAVING THE HUMAN TORCH AND WYATT WINGFOOT BEHIND IN THE NEAR EAST TO SEARCH FOR THE TRAPPED INHUMANS, REED RICHARDS AND HIS LOVELY WIFE SUE RETURN TO F.F. HEADQUARTERS, ACCOMPANIED BY THE EVER-LOVIN' BLUE-EYED THING! ...AND NOW, AS THE CURTAIN RISES, AND THE HOUSE LIGHTS DIM, REED SPEAKS...
ALL SECURITY UNITS REGISTER POSITIVE, HONEY.' NO ATTACKS HAVE BEEN MADE IN OUR ABSENCE!
THAT'S WONDERFUL, DARLING! WITH NO NEW DANGERS IN SIGHT, WE CAN CONTINUE OUR HONEYMOON!
SINCE YOU TWO DON'T EXACTLY NEED NO CHAPERONE, I'M CUTTIN' OUT FER A WHILE!
WAIT'LL ALICIA HEARS THAT HER LUMPY LOVER-BOY'S BACK IN TOWN!
HEY!! WHY DON'T SHE ANSWER??
CLIK! KLAK!

SCRIPTED WITH A SMILE BY:
STAN (THE MAN) LEE

PENCILLED WITH A PASSION BY:
JACK (KING) KIRBY

DELINEATED WITH A DIGNITY BY:
JOVIAL JOEY SINNOTT

LETTERED WITH A LILT BY:
SWINGIN' SAMMY ROSEN

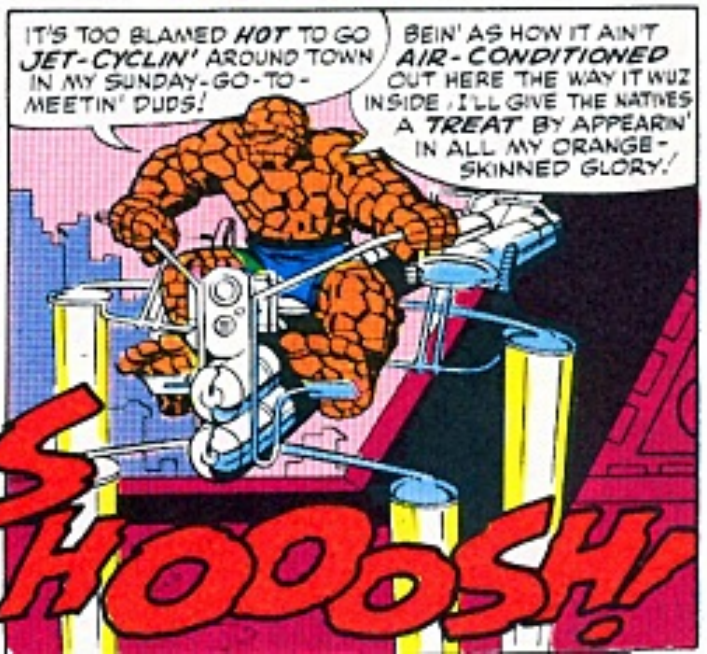
APPLAUDED WITH APLOMB BY:
HONEST IRVING FORBUSH

HOW ABOUT LENDING A HAND WITH THE LUGGAGE, BENJAMIN?
WHY DO YOU LOOK SO WORRIED BEN? ALICIA COULD BE OUT SHOPPING, OR VISITING A FRIEND, OR ANYTHING...!
SURE! AND SHE COULD ALSO BE HAVIN' A DATE WITH SOME NO GOOD, CRUMMY, LOW-LIFE WHO'S TRYIN' TO BEAT MY TIME!
BEN, DEAR, WHY MUST YOU ALWAYS SUSPECT THE WORST?
FIGGER IT OUT, SUSIE! WITH A PAN LIKE MINE, WHAT ELSE WOULDJA EXPECT??!
BZZZZZ
BZZZZZ
BUT, YOU KNOW HOW ALICIA FEELS ABOUT YOU!!
SURE! I KNOW IT..'N YOU KNOW IT..
BUT MEBBE IT AIN'T NEVER OCCURRED TO HER!

YOU'RE PROBABLY WORKING YOURSELF UP OVER NOTHING, BIG FELLA!
YOU CAN'T EXPECT A GIRL TO SIT BY HER PHONE 24 HOURS A DAY, WAITING FOR YOUR CALL!
WHY NOT? YA DON'T MEET GUYS LIKE ME EVERY DAY!
BENJAMIN J. GRIMM! YOU'RE JUST BEING OBDURATE!
MY RELIGION'S GOT NOTHIN' TO DO WITH IT!

YOU REASON WITH HIM, HONEY! I'LL CARRY THE BAGS INSIDE BY MYSELF!
BIG DEAL! WE'LL SEND YA YER MEDAL IN THE MORNIN'!
BEN, IF YOU'RE REALLY CONCERNED ABOUT ALICIA, WHY DON'T YOU DROP OVER TO HER APARTMENT?
SHE'LL PROBABLY BE HOME BY THE TIME YOU GET THERE!

JUST WHAT I WUZ THINKIN', LADY!
I GOT A HUNCH YOU TWO AIN'T GONNA BE HEART-BROKEN TO GIT ME OUTTA YER HAIR FOR A WHILE ANYWAY!
NONSENSE, BEN DEAR! WE DON'T WANT TO GET RID OF YOU!
WHY NOT? IF I WAS STRETCHO, I'D SURE WANNA GIT RIDDA A LUNK LIKE ME!

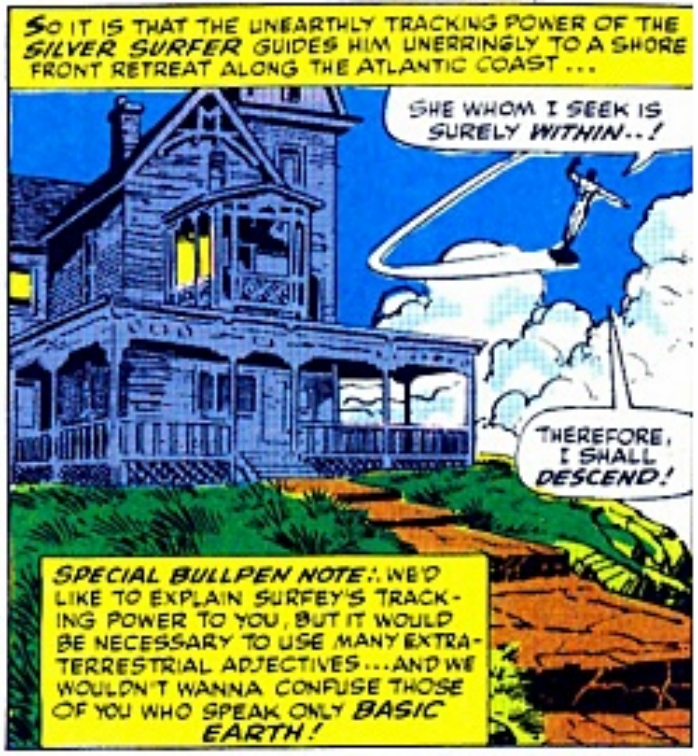

IT'S TOO BLAMED HOT TO GO JET-CYCLIN' AROUND TOWN IN MY SUNDAY-GO-TO-MEETIN' DUDS!
BEIN' AS HOW IT AIN'T AIR-CONDITIONED OUT HERE THE WAY IT WUZ INSIDE, I'LL GIVE THE NATIVES A TREAT BY APPEARIN' IN ALL MY ORANGE-SKINNED GLORY!
SHOOOSH!

MEANWHILE, ATOP ONE OF THE MOST INACCESSIBLE PEAKS IN EUROPE ...
WHAT AN INDESCRIBABLE THRILL! WHAT A GLORIOUS TRIUMPH!
WITHIN SECONDS WE'LL REACH THE VERY SUMMIT..!
WE'LL STAND WHERE NO OTHER LIVING BEING HAS EVER STOOD BEFORE!
WE'LL BE FAMOUS THROUGH-OUT THE WORLD!
A FEAT LIKE THIS MAY NEVER BE DUPLICATED AGAIN!
IT TOOK MONTHS OF PLANNING ... OF SACRIFICE ... BUT IT WAS WORTH IT!
WE'VE DONE THE IMPOSSIBLE!

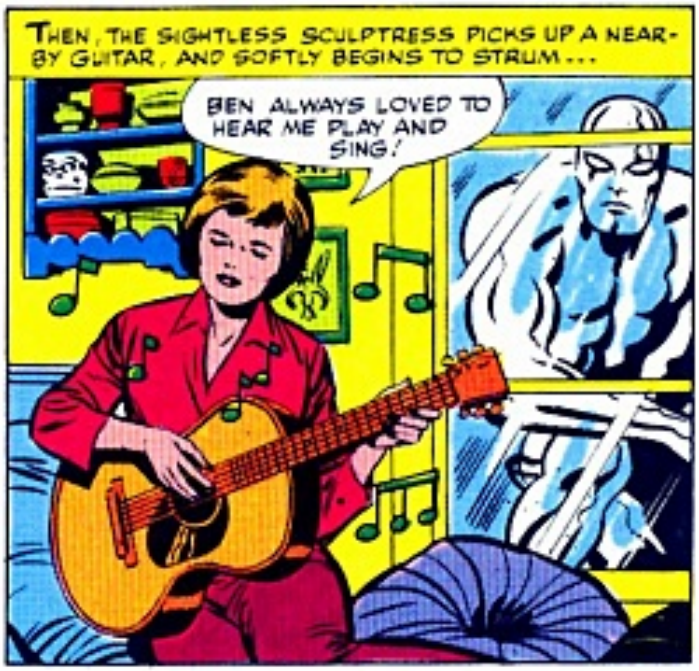
BUT, WHEN THE FIRST MEMBER OF THE DAUNTLESS LITTLE EXPEDITION FINALLY REACHES HIS GOAL ... HIS STARTLED EYES BEHOLD ...
THERE'S SOMEONE.. HERE... BEFORE US..!
I HAVE LEARNED ALL THERE IS TO LEARN OF THE PLANET EARTH...
BUT... WHO?? WHAT..??
THE PLANET UPON WHICH GALACTUS HAS SENTENCED ME TO REMAIN.. FOREVER!*
AND NOW, THE TIME IS COME..
THE SILVER SURFER SHALL RETURN TO THE FEMALE HUMAN WHO HAD ONCE BEFRIENDED HIM!
* FROM THE NOW PRACTICALLY PRICELESS FANTASTIC FOUR #50.. SPECIFIC STAN.

I, WHO HAVE CRESTED THE CURRENTS OF SPACE... WHO HAVE DODGED THE METEOR SWARMS, AND OUT-DISTANCED THE FASTEST COMETS...
I MUST RESIGN MYSELF TO THIS PRISON WHICH MEN CALL EARTH... BECAUSE I DARED GIVE UP THE FREEDOM OF THE UNIVERSE TO AID THE HAPLESS HUMANS!
BUT, I MUST HAVE NO REGRETS! WHATEVER DESTINY AWAITS ME... I SHALL BE TRUE TO MY TRUST, THOUGH I AM A STRANGER IN A WORLD I NEVER MADE!

PROTECTED BY THE SILVERY COAT OF GALACTIC GLAZE I WEAR, NO TEMPERATURE CAN AFFECT ME... NO WIND OR STORM CAN SLOW OR STAY MY FLIGHT!
AND I, WHO CAN TRACK A GRAIN OF DUST THROUGH THE INFINITE VOID OF SPACE, CAN SENSE THE PRESENCE OF ANY LIVING BEING I MAY SEEK!
WHOOOSH!


SO IT IS THAT THE UNEARTHLY TRACKING POWER OF THE SILVER SURFER GUIDES HIM UNERRINGLY TO A SHORE FRONT RETREAT ALONG THE ATLANTIC COAST...
SHE WHOM I SEEK IS SURELY WITHIN..!
THEREFORE, I SHALL DESCEND!
SPECIAL BULLPEN NOTE: WE'D LIKE TO EXPLAIN SURFEY'S TRACKING POWER TO YOU, BUT IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO USE MANY EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL ADJECTIVES...AND WE WOULDN'T WANNA CONFUSE THOSE OF YOU WHO SPEAK ONLY BASIC EARTH!

SHE STANDS AMONG THE FRUITS OF HER LABOR... BUT, HER MIND IS ELSEWHERE.
I THOUGHT I MIGHT FORGET HOW MUCH I MISS BEN BY COMING HERE TO DO MY SCULPTING IN SOLITUDE!
BUT, IT'S NO USE! I CAN'T GET HIM OUT OF MY MIND!
IF ONLY I KNEW WHERE HE IS... IF I COULD KNOW THAT HE'S SAFE!

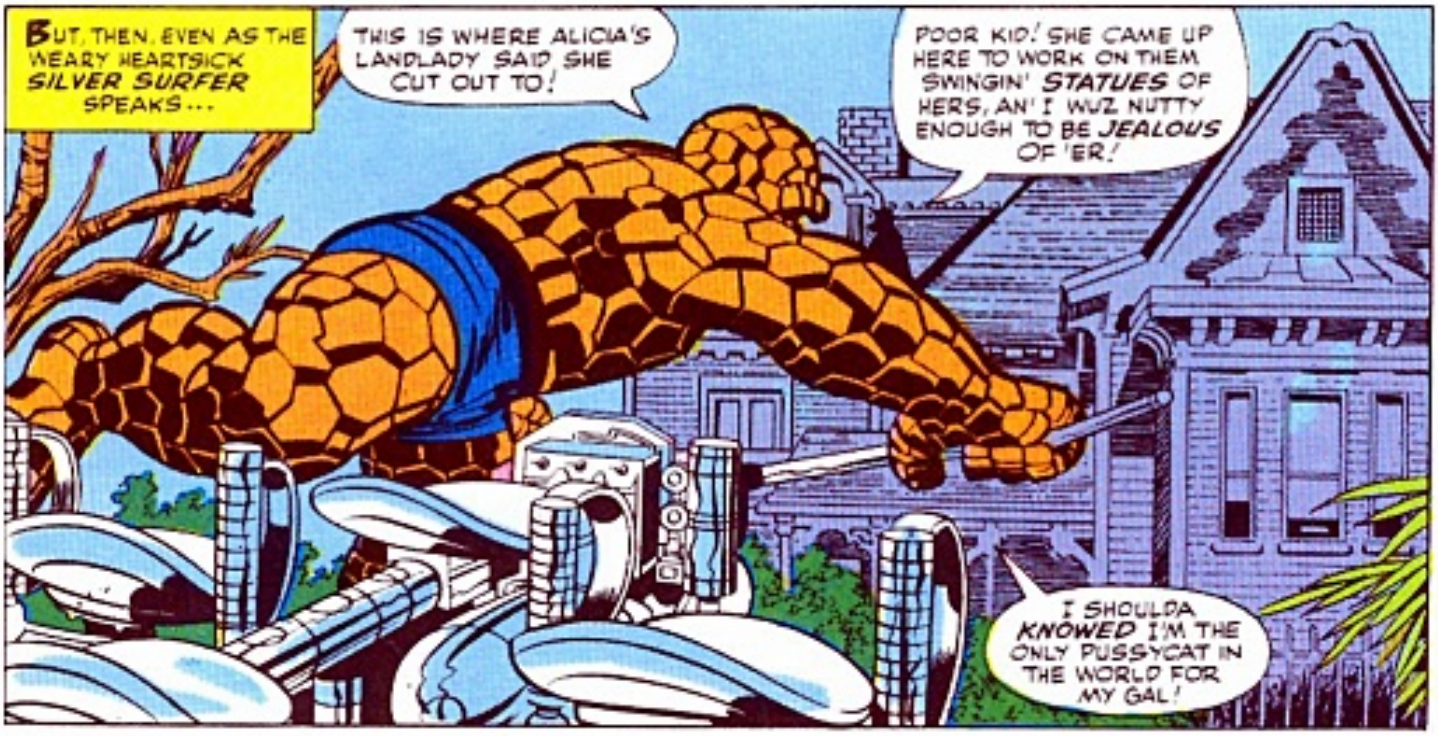

THEN, THE SIGHTLESS SCULPTRESS PICKS UP A NEARBY GUITAR, AND SOFTLY BEGINS TO STRUM...
BEN ALWAYS LOVED TO HEAR ME PLAY AND SING!

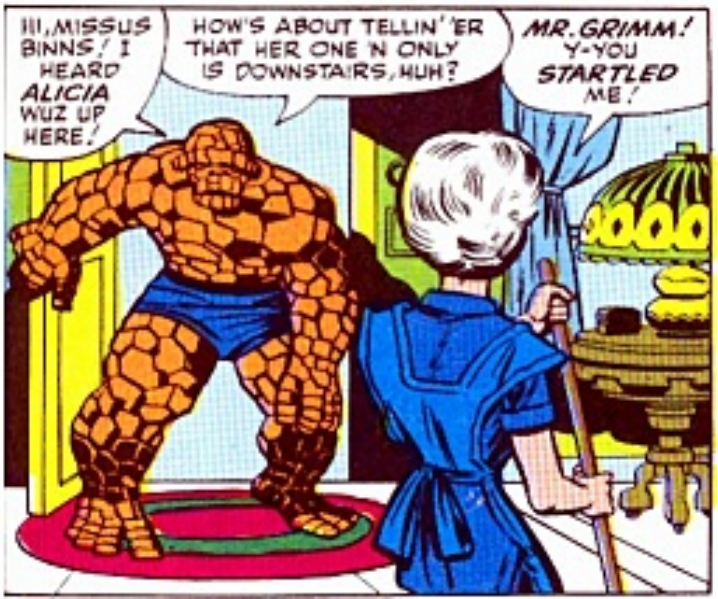
THOSE SOUNDS...! LIKE THE DISTANT SIGHING OF A COSMIC BREEZE!
IF ONLY HE COULD HEAR ME NOW!

TAP! TAP! TAP!
SOMEONE AT THE WINDOW! BUT... WHO CAN IT BE??

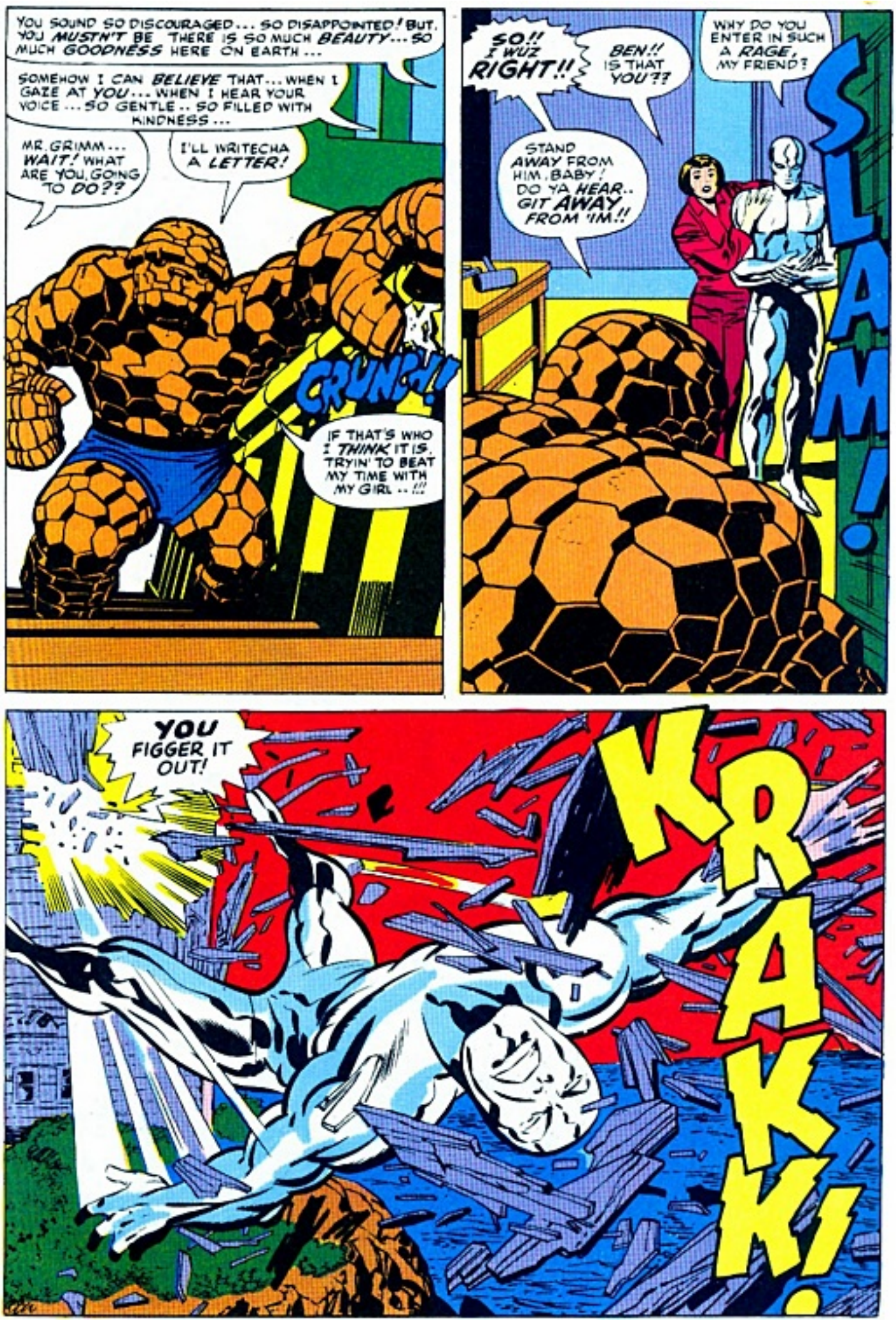
AT A SINGLE GESTURE, A LIGHTNING-LIKE BOLT OF SHEER ENERGY SURROUNDS THE SILVER-SURFER--INSTANTLY DISSOLVING THE WINDOW WHICH STANDS BETWEEN HIM AND THE BLIND ALICIA--! THEN...
DO NOT FEAR! IT IS I!
THAT VOICE! ONE WHICH I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD HEAR AGAIN!
YOU'VE RETURNED... AS YOU SAID YOU WOULD!

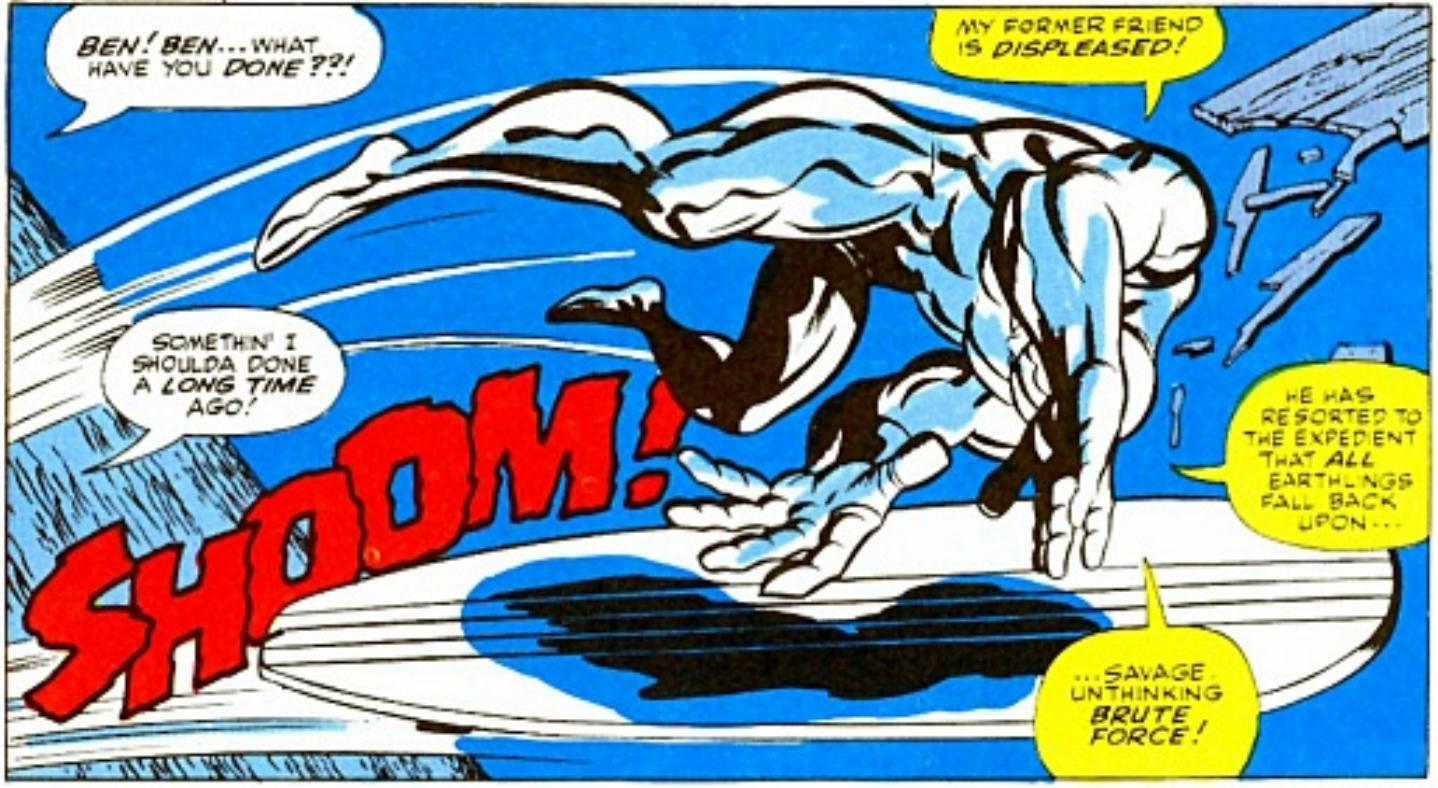
YES! I HAVE FLOWN OVER THIS STRANGE PLANET UPON WHICH HUMANS DWELL!
I HAVE SEEN MEN BUILD...AND DESTROY! I HAVE SEEN THIS WORLD, WHICH COULD BE PARADISE, REDUCED TO A PLANET OF GREED, AND FEAR, AND HATRED! I HAVE SEEN HUMANITY WITH ITS HERITAGE BETRAYED!
I CAN STOMACH NO MORE!


BUT, THEN, EVEN AS THE WEARY HEARTSICK SILVER SURFER SPEAKS...
THIS IS WHERE ALICIA'S LANDLADY SAID SHE CUT OUT TO!
POOR KID! SHE CAME UP HERE TO WORK ON THEM SWINGIN' STATUES OF HERS, AN' I WUZ NUTTY ENOUGH TO BE JEALOUS OF 'ER!
I SHOULDA KNOWED I'M THE ONLY PUSSYCAT IN THE WORLD FOR MY GAL!


III, MISSUS BINNS! I HEARD ALICIA WUZ UP HERE!
HOW'S ABOUT TELLIN' 'ER THAT HER ONE 'N ONLY IS DOWNSTAIRS, HUH?
MR. GRIMM! Y-YOU STARTLED ME!

YEAH! I GUESS IT AIN'T EVERY DAY THAT A PRINCE CHARMIN' COMES CHARGIN' INTA...
HEY! WAIT A MINNIT! WHAT'S A MAN'S VOICE DOIN' UP THERE?
A MAN'S VOICE--?
WELL, IT SURE AIN'T MINNIE MOUSE!

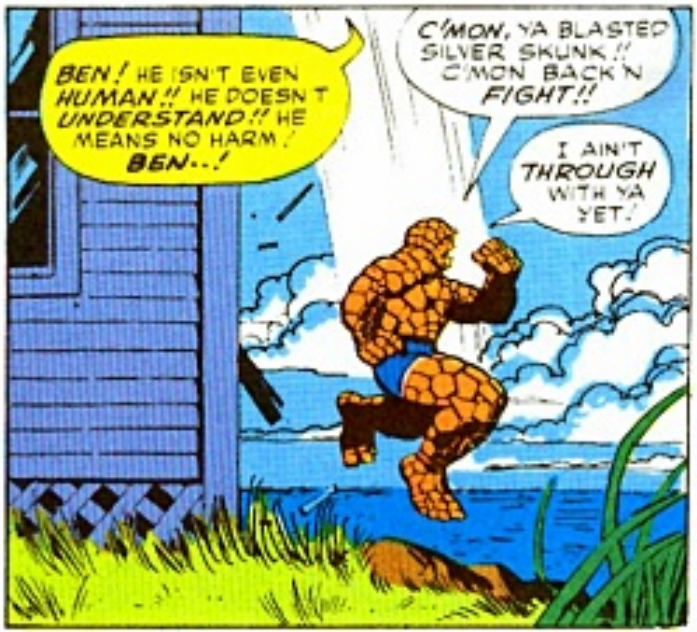

YOU SOUND SO DISCOURAGED... SO DISAPPOINTED! BUT, YOU MUSTN'T BE THERE IS SO MUCH BEAUTY... SO MUCH GOODNESS HERE ON EARTH...
SOMEHOW I CAN BELIEVE THAT... WHEN I GAZE AT YOU... WHEN I HEAR YOUR VOICE... SO GENTLE.. SO FILLED WITH KINDNESS...
MR. GRIMM... WAIT! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO??
I'LL WRITECHA A LETTER!
CRUNCH!
IF THAT'S WHO I THINK IT IS, TRYIN' TO BEAT MY TIME WITH MY GIRL..!!!
SO!! I WUZ RIGHT!!
BEN!! IS THAT YOU??
WHY DO YOU ENTER IN SUCH A RAGE, MY FRIEND?
STAND AWAY FROM HIM, BABY! DO YA HEAR.. GIT AWAY FROM 'IM!!
SLAM!
YOU FIGGER IT OUT!
KRAK!


BEN! BEN... WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!
MY FORMER FRIEND IS DISPLEASED!
SOMETHIN' I SHOULDA DONE A LONG TIME AGO!
SHOOM!
HE HAS RESORTED TO THE EXPEDIENT THAT ALL EARTHLINGS FALL BACK UPON...
...SAVAGE, UNTHINKING BRUTE FORCE!

BUT WHY?
WHAT MOTIVE CAN HE HAVE?
DID WE NOT ONCE BATTLE GALACTUS TOGETHER?

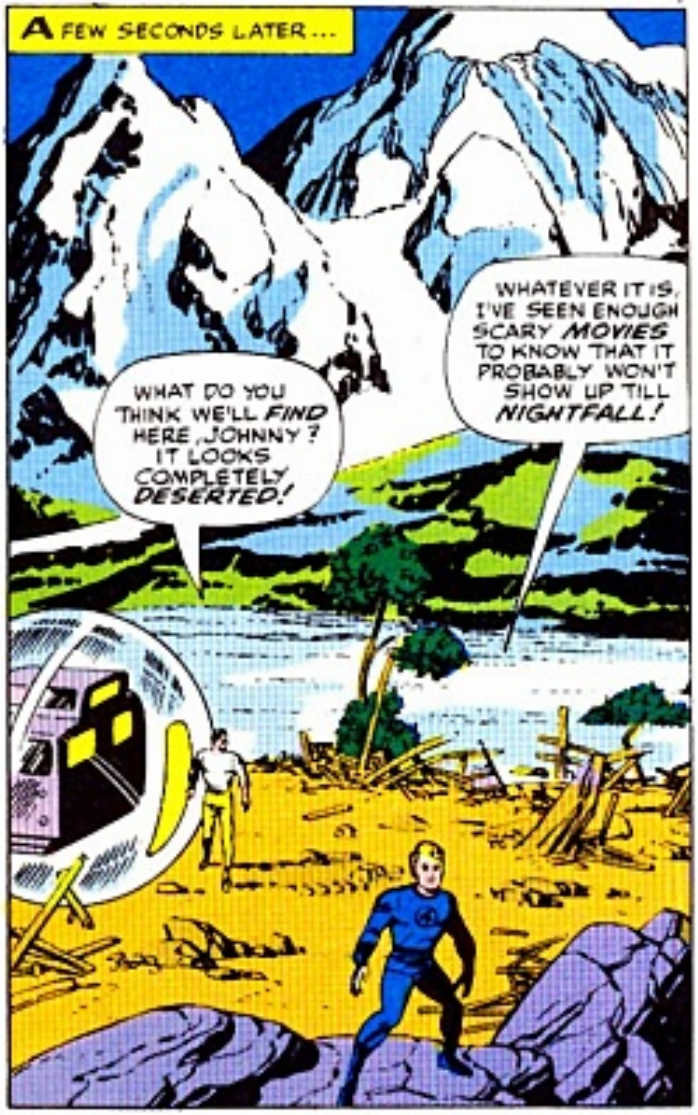
AND, WHAT PURPOSE DID HE HOPE TO SERVE BY STRIKING ME?
I, WHO AM NOURISHED BY THE ENERGY OF THE INFINITE!
I, WHO POSSESS POWER ENOUGH TO DIVERT THE COURSE OF A FALLING STAR!

HE MANAGED TO GET ON THAT BLASTED SURF-BOARD OF HIS!
HE'S COMIN' BACK AGIN'!!
NO, BEN!! NO!! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, MY DARLING! WAIT... LISTEN TO ME..!
IT'S NO USE! HE'S SO CONSUMED BY JEALOUSY THAT HE DOESN'T EVEN HEAR ME!
THIS TIME I'LL BELT 'IM CLEAN UP TO THE MOON!


BEN! HE ISN'T EVEN HUMAN!! HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND!! HE MEANS NO HARM! BEN..!
C'MON, YA BLASTED SILVER SKUNK!! C'MON BACK 'N FIGHT!!
I AIN'T THROUGH WITH YA YET!

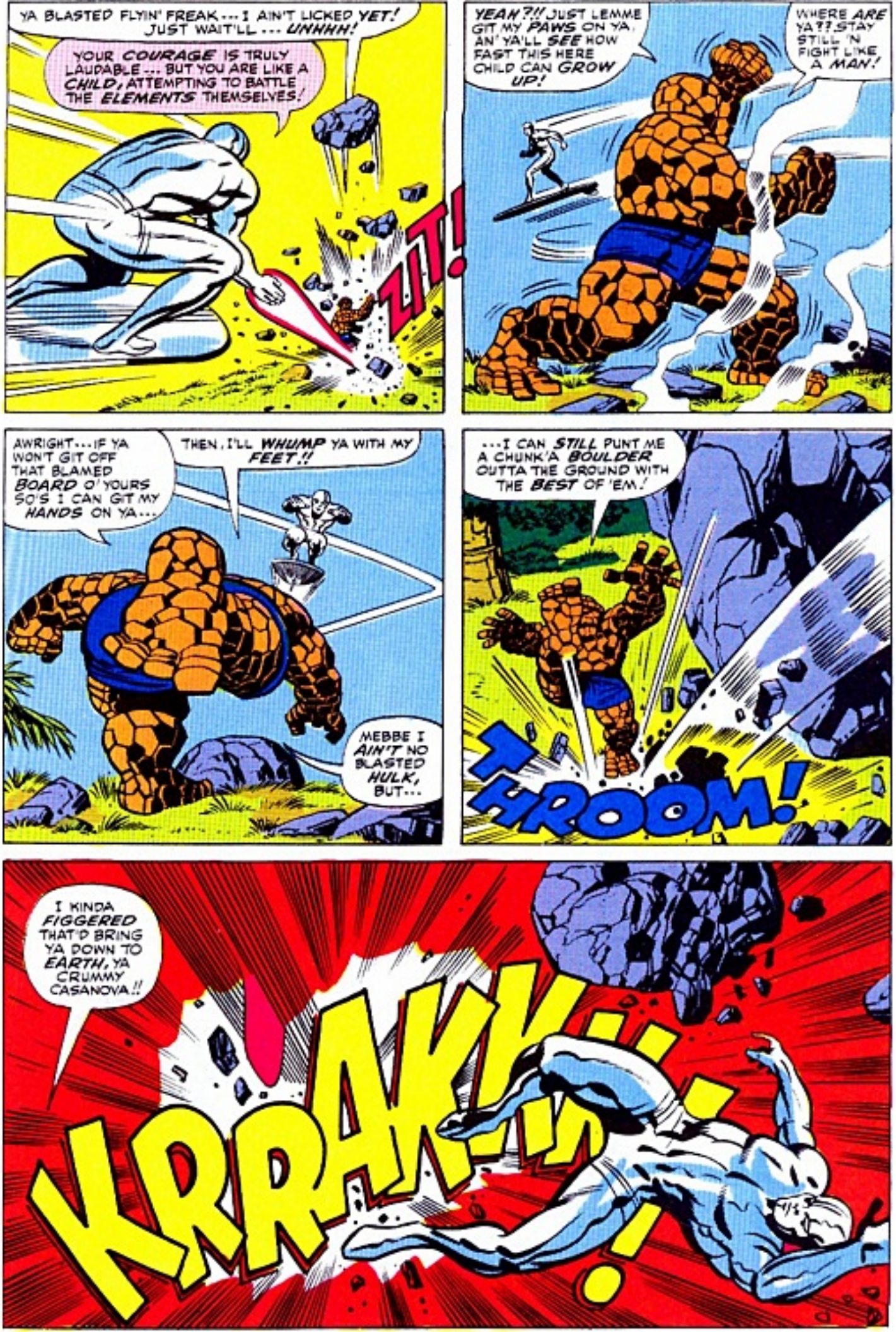
IF YOU INSIST UPON A FIGHT, I SHALL NOT DISAPPOINT YOU!
GOWAN... KEEP IT UP.. TALK BIG... SO'S YA CAN IMPRESS ALICIA..!
A FAT LOTTA GOOD IT'LL DO YA!
BEN! IT'S YOU I'M WORRIED ABOUT..NOT HIM! HE'S TOO POWERFUL!
OH, BEN... MY POOR FOOLISH DARLING..!
THAT'S IT! C'MON DOWN HERE, WHERE I CAN CLOBBER YA!
IF FIGHT WE MUST, I AM BOUND TO USE THE WEAPONS OF THE SILVER SURFER!
WEAPONS SUCH AS THIS IRRESISTIBLE COSMIC BLAST!!
URRGHH!
ZAK!
NEVER SHALL I TRULY UNDERSTAND THE HUMAN RACE!
WHAT DO THEY SEEK TO PROVE BY THEIR ETERNAL BATTLING? WHAT GLORY DO THEY FIND IN HARMING A FELLOW BEING?
OR, AS I SOMETIMES SUSPECT, HAVE I BEEN CONDEMNED TO A WORLD WHERE MADNESS REIGNS?
BUT, LET US PAUSE... FOR JUST A BRIEF MOMENT OR TWO..TO VISIT A LONELY PASS IN THE FAR-OFF HIMALAYAS, WHERE A SILENT GYRO-CRUISER SIGHTS A STREAM OF FEARFUL REFUGEES FLEEING FROM A NAMELESS MENACE...
LOOK, JOHNNY! THE STREAM OF REFUGEES IS STILL EVACUATING THE VALLEY!
WE'VE GOT TO LEARN WHAT THEY'RE AFRAID OF... EVEN THOUGH IT MEANS DELAYING MY SEARCH FOR THE INHUMANS!
PREPARE TO LAND, WYATT!

FASTER! FASTER! THE MONSTER MAY SOON BE UPON US!
WHATEVER THEY'RE RUNNING FROM, MUST BE IN THAT VALLEY BELOW!
DO NOT FEAR, MY CHILD! WE SHALL ESCAPE!
RIGHT, WYATT! SO THAT'S OUR DESTINATION!
NONE THAT LIVE ARE SAFE IN THE VALLEY OF THE MONSTER!


A FEW SECONDS LATER...
WHAT DO YOU THINK WE'LL FIND HERE, JOHNNY? IT LOOKS COMPLETELY DESERTED!
WHATEVER IT IS, I'VE SEEN ENOUGH SCARY MOVIES TO KNOW THAT IT PROBABLY WON'T SHOW UP TILL NIGHTFALL!

SO, WE MIGHT AS WELL MAKE OURSELVES COMFORTABLE TILL THEN!
IT GETS DARK PRETTY QUICKLY IN THESE MOUNTAINS!
AT LEAST WE WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT FORGETTING TO BRING MATCHES!
I CAN HEAR SOMETHING MOVING ON THE CLIFF ABOVE US!
WHATEVER IT IS, WE'LL BE ABLE TO HANDLE IT!
I HOPE!

AND NOW, JUST TO PROVE WE NEVER BREAK OUR PROMISES...
LOOK! THERE IT IS!
...WE TOLD YOU WE'D ONLY PAUSE FOR A BRIEF MOMENT OR TWO; SO WHAT BETTER TIME THAN THIS TO RETURN ONCE MORE TO OUR FORMER SCENE OF BATTLE...


YA BLASTED FLYIN' FREAK... I AIN'T LICKED YET! JUST WAIT'LL... UNHHH!
YOUR COURAGE IS TRULY LAUDABLE... BUT YOU ARE LIKE A CHILD, ATTEMPTING TO BATTLE THE ELEMENTS THEMSELVES!
ZIT!
YEAH?!! JUST LEMME GIT MY PAWS ON YA, AN' YA'LL SEE HOW FAST THIS HERE CHILD CAN GROW UP!
WHERE ARE YA?! STAY STILL 'N FIGHT LIKE A MAN!
AWRIGHT... IF YA WON'T GIT OFF THAT BLAMED BOARD O' YOURS SO'S I CAN GIT MY HANDS ON YA...
THEN, I'LL WHUMP YA WITH MY FEET!!
MEBBE I AIN'T NO BLASTED HULK, BUT...
...I CAN STILL PUNT ME A CHUNK'A BOULDER OUTTA THE GROUND WITH THE BEST OF 'EM!
THROOM!
I KINDA FIGGERED THAT'D BRING YA DOWN TO EARTH, YA CRUMMY CASANOVA!!
KRRAK!!!

NOW THAT I GOTCHA WHERE I CAN REACH YA I'LL..!
WHAT'SAMATTER WITH ME? THAT MILK-WHITE MONKEY'S TRYIN' TO STEAL MY GAL AWAY...AND I GOTTA FORCE MYSELF TO HATE 'IM!
WHY DO I KEEP PULLIN' MY PUNCH EVERY TIME I TOSS A HAYMAKER HIS WAY??
THOUGH YOU ARE MERELY AN EARTH MORTAL, YOUR NATURAL STRENGTH IS ALMOST BEYOND MY COMPREHENSION!
STAND STILL. BLAST YA! IT'LL ONLY HURT FOR A MINNIT!
BUT, EVEN FOR ONE WHO RIDES THE CURRENTS OF SPACE, THE FIRST LAW IS SELF-PRESERVATION! AND SO...

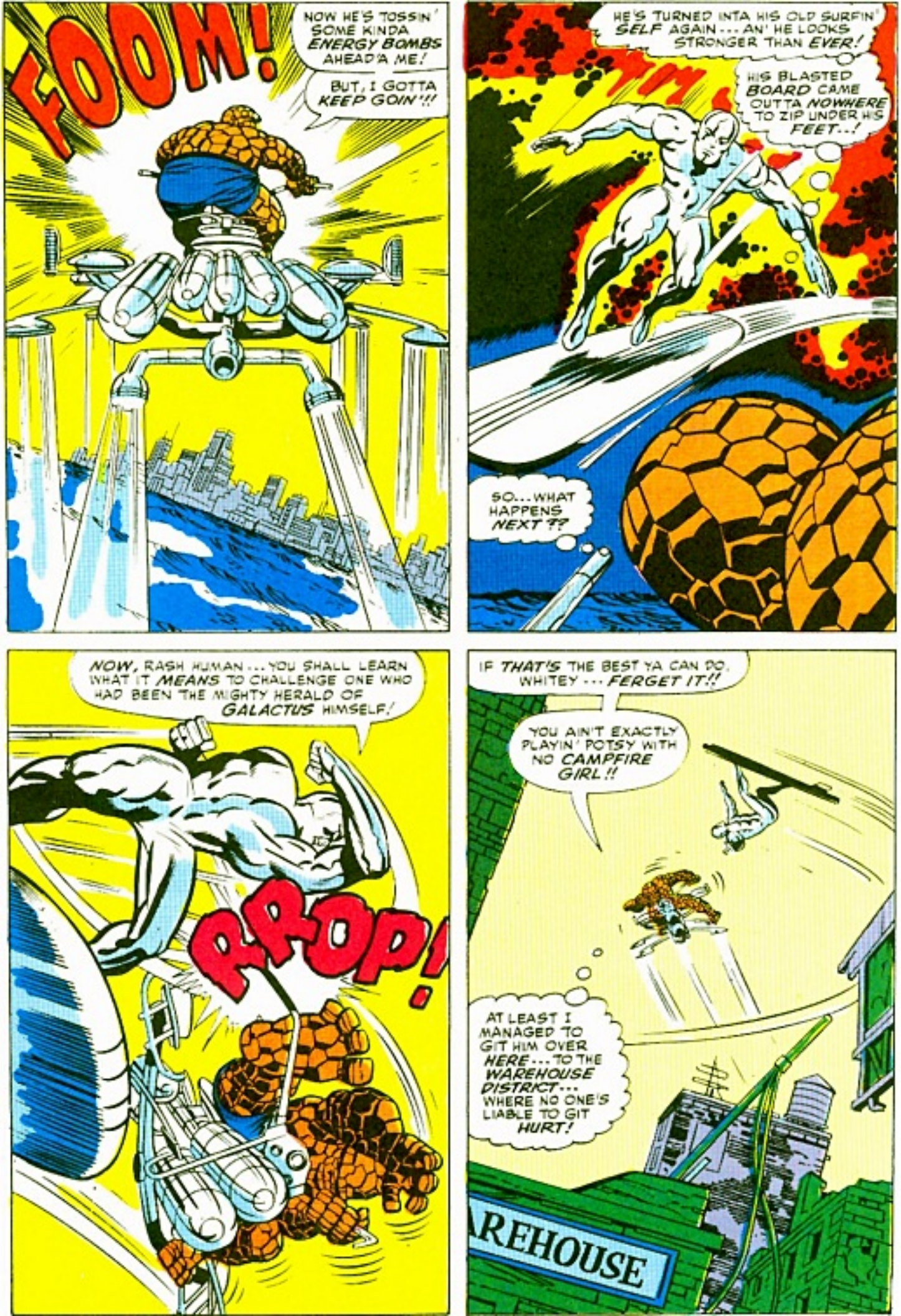
...WHILE OUR BATTLE CONTINUES, I SHALL INTENSIFY MY ENERGY BUILD-UP, UNTIL...
WHAT'S HAPPENIN'? MY FIST CAN'T REACH 'IM!

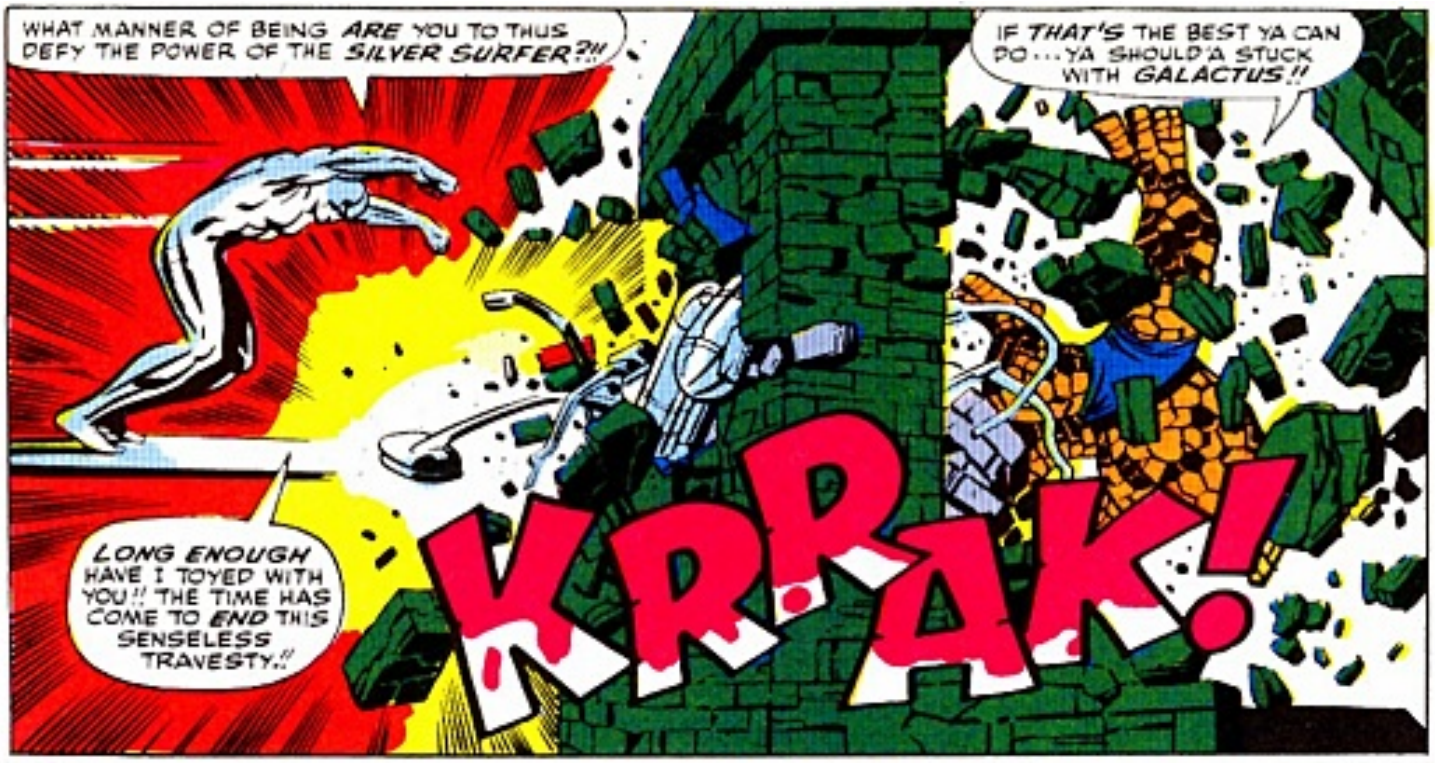
AT LAST, MY OWN STRENGTH IS GREAT ENOUGH TO MATCH YOURS!
YER WASTIN' YER TIME, MISTER! YOU AIN'T GONNA TALK ME OUTTA THE PICTURE!
YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT I AM NOT BOUND BY THE PHYSICAL LAWS OF EARTH!
YOU STILL DO NOT SE THAT I CAN INCREASE MY EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL ENERGY TO ALMOST ANY DEGREE I DESIRE!

AND NOW, I AM ABLE TO BATTLE YOU IN YOUR OWN MANNER...
..USING THE PRIMITIVE METHOD OF BARE FIST AGAINST DEFENSELESS BODY!!
WOK!
I'LL SNOW YA WHO'S DEFENSE-LESS! I'LL... UNHHH!..

BUT, I PERCEIVE THAT YOU SHALL NEVER SURRENDER!
THEREFORE, I MUST TAKE EXTREME MEASURES..!
I MUST INCREASE MY ENERGY TO ATOMIC STRENGTH!!

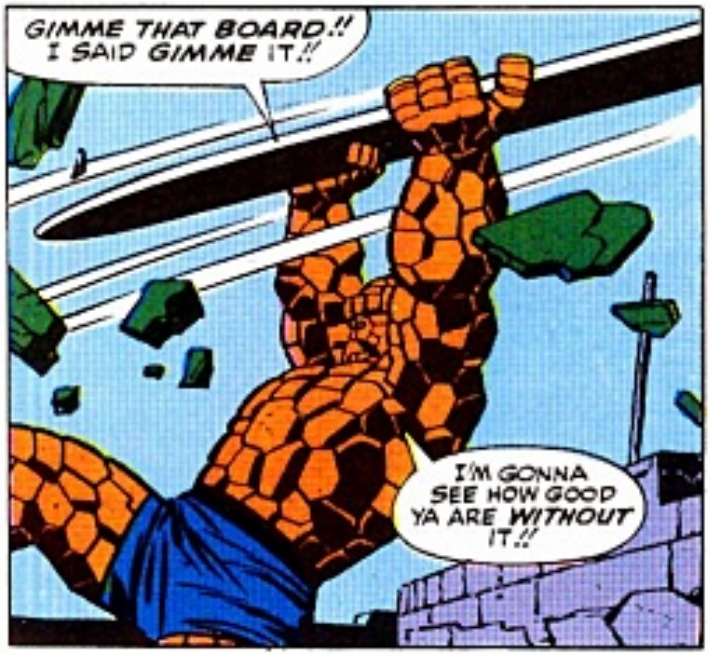
NOW, EVEN YOU WOULD NOT DARE ATTACK ME!
DON'T BET ON IT, KIDDO!
THERE AIN'T NOTHIN' I WON'T TACKLE WHERE ALICIA'S CONCERNED!
UHHHH!
ZIT!
I'M THE PRIZE CHUMP OF ALL TIME!
HE'S TURNIN' HIMSELF INTO A WALKIN' ATOM BOMB... AND IT'S ALL ON ACCOUNT'A ME!
I BEEN SO BUSY HAVIN' A TEMPER TANTRUM, THAT I FERGOT THE BIGGEST DANGER OF ALL...
HE AIN'T HUMAN!! HE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT HE'S DOIN'! HE CAN PROBABLY BLOW UP THIS WHOLE HUNKA GEO-GRAPHY WITHOUT HALF-TRYIN'!
AND THAT MEANS ALICIA... AND EVERYONE ELSE... WILL GO SKY-HIGH WITH IT!
IT'S UP TO ME TO GET HIM OUTTA HERE... AND FAST!
THE JET-CYCLE!! IT'S MY ONLY CHANCE..!
THEN, A FEW FRANTIC SECONDS LATER...
HE'S TURNED HIMSELF INTO A SOLID HUNK'A ENERGY... COMIN' AFTER ME LIKE A CRAZY COMET..!!
I GOTTA THROW THIS GIZMO INTO FULL ROCKET SPEED 'N HOPE I CAN STAY AHEAD OF 'IM LONG ENUFF TO THINK OF SOMETHIN'!
SO HERE GOES NUTHIN'..!
CLICK!
SHOOOOOOSH!


FOOM!
NOW HE'S TOSSIN' SOME KINDA ENERGY BOMBS AHEAD'A ME!
BUT, I GOTTA KEEP GOIN'!!!
HE'S TURNED INTA HIS OLD SURFIN' SELF AGAIN... AN' HE LOOKS STRONGER THAN EVER!
HIS BLASTED BOARD CAME OUTTA NOWHERE TO ZIP UNDER HIS FEET..!
SO... WHAT HAPPENS NEXT??
NOW, RASH HUMAN... YOU SHALL LEARN WHAT IT MEANS TO CHALLENGE ONE WHO HAD BEEN THE MIGHTY HERALD OF GALACTUS HIMSELF!
RROP!
IF THAT'S THE BEST YA CAN DO, WHITEY... FERGET IT!!
YOU AIN'T EXACTLY PLAYIN' POTSY WITH NO CAMPFIRE GIRL!!
AT LEAST I MANAGED TO GIT HIM OVER HERE... TO THE WAREHOUSE DISTRICT... WHERE NO ONE'S LIABLE TO GIT HURT!
REHOUSE


WHAT MANNER OF BEING ARE YOU TO THUS DEFY THE POWER OF THE SILVER SURFER?!!
IF THAT'S THE BEST YA CAN DO... YA SHOULD'A STUCK WITH GALACTUS!!
KRRAK!
LONG ENOUGH HAVE I TOYED WITH YOU!! THE TIME HAS COME TO END THIS SENSELESS TRAVESTY!!

HEAR ME, HUMAN! I GROW WEARY OF THIS ENDLESS BATTLE!
THE WAYS OF EARTHMEN ARE STILL FAR BEYOND MY OWN COMPREHENSION!

YEAH? WELL HERE'S WHERE I FINISH YER EDJICATION, ROMEO!
AND I'LL START BY WRAPPIN THIS CRUMMY BOARD AROUND THAT SCRAWNY NECK OF YOURS!
THEN YOU WILL NOT LISTEN TO REASON?
SURE I WILL!
AFTER I'M DONE CLOBBERIN' YA!


GIMME THAT BOARD!! I SAID GIMME IT!!
I'M GONNA SEE HOW GOOD YA ARE WITHOUT IT!!

YA BUSTED MY JET-CYCLE WHEN YA SLAMMED ME THROUGH THAT WALL...
SO, BEFORE I PLASTER YA ALL OVER THE LANDSCAPE, I'M GONNA DO THE SAME THING TO THIS OVERGROWN IRONIN' BOARD OF YOURS!!

BUT, IF WE STAY AWAY TOO LONG FROM JOHNNY AND WYATT, YOU'RE LIABLE TO FORGET WHERE WE LEFT OFF WITH THEM --- AND WE WOULDN'T WANT THAT TO HAPPEN ---
HOLD IT, WYATT!
IF YOU HEAR ANYTHING, I'LL FLAME ON AND HAVE A LOOK-SEE!
NO! I AM MORE EXPERIENCED AT TRACKING AN UNSEEN FOE, JOHNNY--!
THIS TRANQUILIZER RIFLE CAN HANDLE ANYTHING I MAY FIND!
I WAS RIGHT! THERE IS SOMETHING JUST AHEAD --- BEYOND THE ROCKY BOULDER! I CAN HEAR IT BREATHING!
ANYTHING THAT BREATHES SO HARD --- IT MUST BE.. ENORMOUS!
HEAVY PADDED PAWS... COMING CLOSER! IT'S ABOUT TO LUNGE!
BUT, THE TRANQUILIZER SHELL WILL STOP IT.. NO MATTER WHAT!
HERE IT COMES! I'VE GOT TO..OH.. NO!!
IT MOVED TOO FAST!!
IT GRABBED THE GUN BARREL!!
I THOUGHT I HEARD THE SOUND OF A STRUGGLE!
HANG ON, WYATT! I'LL TAKE CARE OF HIM!!
IT'S SOME SORT OF BEAST... CAN'T SEE HIM CLEARLY!! BUT... HE'S GOT THE GUN IN HIS JAWS..!!
I'VE NEVER KNOWN SUCH AN IRON GRIP!!
JAWS?? IRON GRIP!! IT CAN'T BE... BUT--IT IS! IT IS!!
WYATT--STOP STRUGGLING!! IT'S OKAY! EVERYTHING'S ALL RIGHT!!
IT'S CRYSTAL'S DOG!! HE'S COME FROM THE INHUMANS!!
IT'S LOCKJAW!!
HE IS WELL-NAMED, MY FRIEND!
GRRRRR

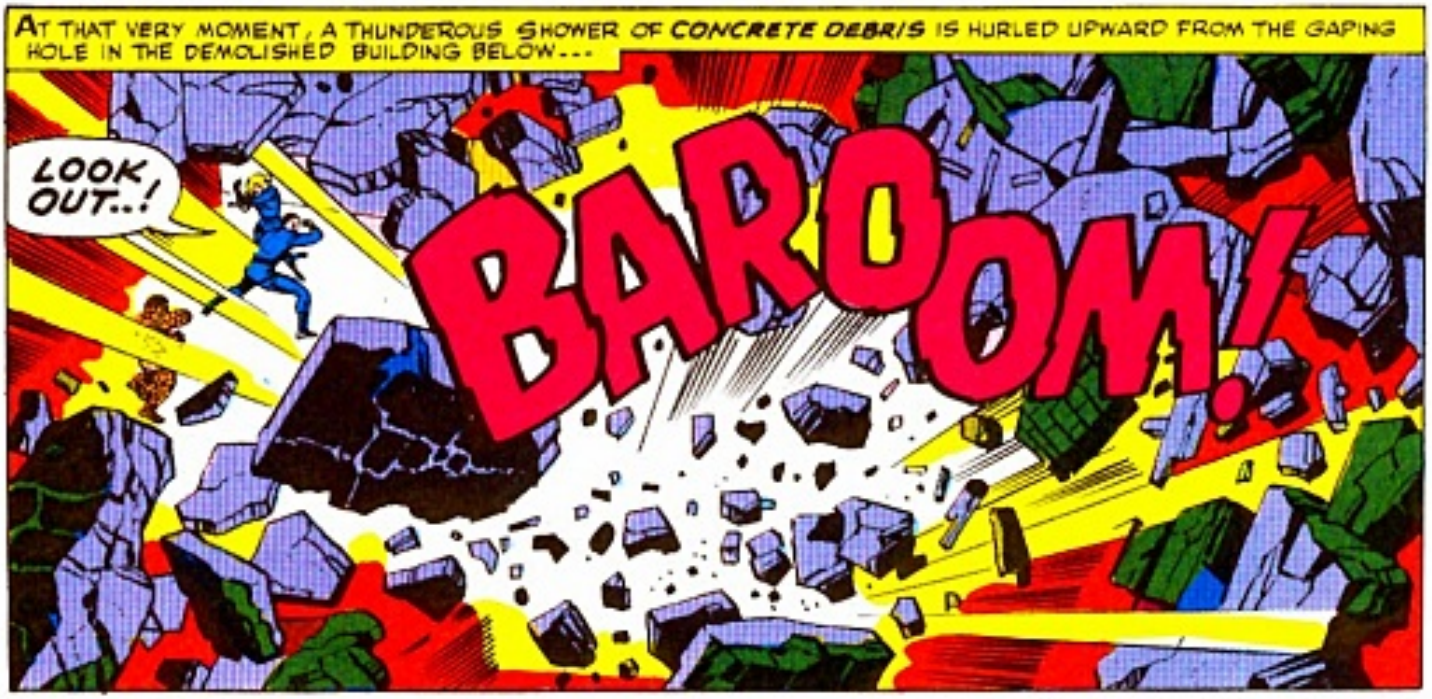
LOCKJAW... IT'S ME... JOHNNY! YOU KNOW ME, BOY... YOU KNOW ME!
I DON'T KNOW HOW HE DID IT, BUT HE DID! HE FREED HIMSELF!
BUT THEN... IF HE WAS ABLE TO BREAK THROUGH THE BARRIER...!
HE MANAGED TO GET THROUGH THE NEGATIVE BARRIER WHICH IS HOLDING CRYSTAL AND THE OTHERS PRISONER!
OF COURSE! IT MEANS THERE IS A WAY--THERE HAS TO BE!
LOCKJAW HAS THE POWER TO TRAVEL BETWEEN DIMENSIONS.. TO TRANSPORT HIMSELF ANY-WHERE!
ALL WE'VE GOT TO DO IS LEARN HIS SECRET... FIND A WAY TO FOLLOW HIM..!!
THAT MAY BE MORE DIFFICULT THAN IT SOUNDS, JOHNNY..!
AND, SPEAKING OF THINGS THAT ARE DIFFICULT, LET'S RETURN ONCE MORE TO RAGING, FRUSTRATED, BLUE-EYED BEN GRIMM...
UNHHH!!
I DON'T GET IT! I CAN TEAR A BRICK BUILDIN' APART WITH MY BARE HANDS... OR PEEL THE SIDES OF A BATTLESHIP OFF LIKE A STEEL BANANA SKIN...
BUT I CAN'T EVEN MAKE A DENT IN THIS ONE CRUMMY, SAWED-OFF PLANK!!!
OF COURSE YOU CANNOT!
THAT IS NO MERE EARTHLY ARTIFACT YOU STRUGGLE WITH! IT WAS SPAWNED AMONG THE DISTANT STARS!!
YOUR MORTAL BRAIN COULD NEVER BEGIN TO COMPREHEND ITS COSMIC POWER!
IT IS MORE THAN MERELY A MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION! IT IS TRULY PART OF ME.. AND I..A PART OF IT!
THRIPP!

NOW THAT YOU REALIZE HOW FUTILE IT IS TO ATTACK ME...
I DON'T REALIZE NOTHIN'!!!
HOW MUCH MORE PROOF DO YOU NEED?
MORE THAN YOU COULD EVER DISH OUT, MISTER!
OKAY, BIG SHOT! WE BEEN PLAYIN' IT YOUR WAY UP TILL NOW!
I BEEN LISTENIN' TO ALL YER FANCY TALK ABOUT YER COSMIC ENERGY, AND THAT NUTTY SURFBOARD... AND HOW MUCH BETTER YA ARE THAN US EARTH JOES...
BUT NOW, I'M GONNA START MAKIN' WITH THE LECTURE...
..MY WAY!
MOVING LIKE SOME GIANT, LIVING DYNAMO, THE UNCONQUERABLE THING RAISES ONE OF THE MIGHTIEST FISTS IN EXISTENCE...
...AND HAMMERS IT DOWN UPON THE WAREHOUSE ROOF WITH THE MIND-STAGGERING FORCE OF A HUNDRED PILE DRIVERS...
THOOOM!
A SPLIT-SECOND LATER, THE ENTIRE ROOF GIVES WAY, COLLAPSING UNDER THE FORCE OF A BLOW WHOSE POWER DEFIES ANY MERE MORTAL DESCRIPTION...
HAPPY LANDIN'S, BUTTERCUP!
KRRRAKK!
RRRUMMMBBBLE!
HOW COME YA AIN'T BRAGGIN' NOW?!!

AND IF THAT AIN'T ENUFF TO MAKE 'IM WISH HE'D NEVER SET EYES ON ALICIA...
I'LL FEED 'IM THE REST OF THE JOINT FER DESSERT!
RRAK!
YA BLASTED BIG-TALKIN' SPACE PIRATE!!
THOUGHT YA COULD COME IN OUTTA THE BLUE AN' SHOOT ME DOWN WITH ALICIA, DIDJA?
FIGGERED YA COULD SWEET-TALK HER AWAY FROM A SLOB LIKE ME, HUH?
DON'T GO 'WAY... YA AIN'T SEEN NOTHIN' YET!!
BAM!
BUT, SUDDENLY A LONG, PLIABLE ARM REACHES OUT, GRABBING THE STEEL-SINEWED WRIST OF BEN GRIMM LIKE A COILED SNAKE...
HOLD IT, BEN... HOLD IT! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING, FELLA!
STAY OUTTA THIS, STRETCH! IT AIN'T NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS... SO LEGGO!!
TH
WIPPP!
I'M MAKING IT MY BUSINESS, BEN!
WE'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR YOU IN THAT POLICE HELICOPTER!
ALICIA PHONED US... SICK WITH WORRY! SHE BEGGED US TO FIND YOU... TO BRING YOU TO YOUR SENSES.. IF YOU'VE ANY LEFT!
NOW SIMMER DOWN AND LET ME EXPLAIN..!
EXPLAIN WHAT?!!

GET THAT CHIP OFF YOUR SHOULDER, BIG FELLA, BEFORE I KNOCK IT OFF... AND YOU'VE GOT ME ITCHING TO DO IT, TOO!
I THOUGHT YOU WERE IN LOVE WITH ALICIA... BUT INSTEAD, YOU'VE LEFT HER CRYING HER EYES OUT!
SURE! OVER THAT CRUMMY SILVER SURFER!
OH, NO, BEN... NO!

WHEN ARE YOU GONNA GROW UP, GRIMM?! OR ARE YOU TRYING TO PROVE YOU'RE REALLY AS DUMB AS YOU LOOK?
THE SURFER DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING TO ALICIA... HE'S NOT EVEN HUMAN! SHE FELT SORRY FOR HIM... THAT'S ALL! IT'S YOU SHE'S WORRIED ABOUT!
I WOULDN'T LET NO ONE TALK TO ME LIKE YOU JUST DID, MISTER...
'LESS MEBBE I KNEW... DEEP DOWN... THAT YER RIGHT!
SHE WAS AFRAID YOU'D BE INJURED... FIGHTING OVER NOTHING!


AT THAT VERY MOMENT, A THUNDEROUS SHOWER OF CONCRETE DEBRIS IS HURLED UPWARD FROM THE GAPING HOLE IN THE DEMOLISHED BUILDING BELOW...
LOOK OUT..!
BAROOM!

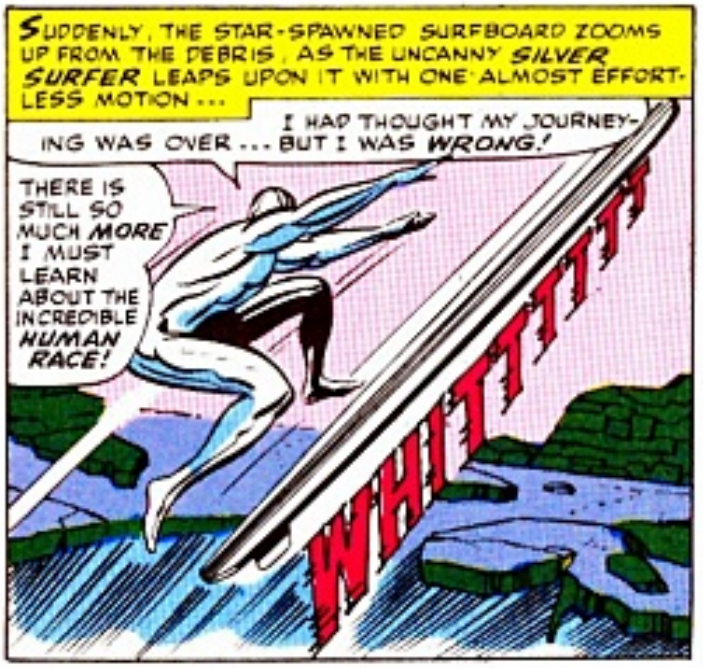
AND, WHEN THE INCREDIBLE HOLOCAUST SUBSIDES...
IT'S THE SILVER SURFER!
HE WAS BENEATH ALL THE RUBBLE!
HE HURLED IT ALL FROM HIM... WITH HIS OWN NATURAL POWER!
HERE.. LET ME GIVE YOU A HAND! YOU LOOK EXHAUSTED!
I.. AM.. WEARY..!

NOW LISTEN, BEN... WE'VE BEEN FRIENDS FOR YEARS... I'D GIVE MY LIFE FOR YOU... AND YOU KNOW IT!
BUT, YOU BIG, BLISTER-BRAINED BABOON, IF YOU DON'T APOLOGIZE TO HIM FOR ACTING LIKE A MISANTHROPIC MADMAN, I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT CLOBBERING REALLY MEANS!!
AWRIGHT... AWRIGHT! I GIT THE MESSAGE! I ACTED LIKE A CHUMP!
PLEASE.. IT DOES NOT MATTER!

YOU DON'T KNOW HOW LUCKY YOU ARE, BEN! HE ONLY USED A FRACTION OF HIS POWER AGAINST YOU!
HE DIDN'T WANT TO HURT YOU... HE JUST TRIED TO PROTECT HIMSELF!
DO NOT ARGUE AMONGST YOURSELVES! THERE IS STILL MUCH I MUST LEARN ABOUT HUMAN BEHAVIOR!
HE STILL DOESN'T EVEN KNOW THE REASON FOR YOUR BONE-HEADED ATTACK!
PERHAPS I AM AS MUCH TO BLAME.. FOR GIVING OFFENSE WITHOUT CAUSE!

LET ME DO WHAT I CAN TO MAKE AMENDS!
THAT WHICH ENERGY CAN DESTROY, ENERGY CAN AGAIN REBUILD!
THEREFORE, I SHALL BATHE THE DEMOLISHED JET-CYCLE WITH AN INTERCOSMIC ENERGIZER BOLT!
ZIZT!

FOR THE LUVVA MIKE!! THE CYCLE'S GOOD AS NEW AGAIN!
IT'S THE MOST INCREDIBLE EXHIBITION OF MOLECULAR RECONSTRUCTION ONE COULD IMAGINE!
SHEEESH! CAN'TCHA EVER JUST SAY HOLY SMOKE, 'N LET IT GO AT THAT?!!


SUDDENLY, THE STAR-SPAWNED SURFBOARD ZOOMS UP FROM THE DEBRIS, AS THE UNCANNY SILVER SURFER LEAPS UPON IT WITH ONE ALMOST EFFORTLESS MOTION...
I HAD THOUGHT MY JOURNEYING WAS OVER... BUT I WAS WRONG!
THERE IS STILL SO MUCH MORE I MUST LEARN ABOUT THE INCREDIBLE HUMAN RACE!
WHITTTTTT

THANK HEAVEN EVERYTHING IS ALL RIGHT AGAIN, REED!
ALL RIGHT? NOT FOR ME IT AIN'T! HOW'LL I EVER MAKE UP WITH ALICIA..?
I HEARD WHAT YOU SAID..!
PERHAPS I CAN HELP YOU...

GIVE THOSE TO THE ONE CALLED ALICIA!
IT IS A PARTING GIFT ... TO YOU BOTH... FROM THE SILVER SURFER!
THIP!
A BUNCHA FLOWERS!!

HE'S GONE! BUT, SOONER OR LATER HE'LL BE COMIN' BACK!
AND, WHEN HE COMES...
WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN THEN?
NEXT
"TO FREE THE INHUMANS!"

PART TWO

THERE SHALL COME A JOLLY GREEN GIANT

JUST because this is the start of Part Two, that doesn't mean we're finished with Part One. There are still some things I want to mention about The Fantastic Four. This is just to warn you that, if you expect a tightly structured text, you're not apt to find it when the author is a guy whose comic-book stories used to ramble on from issue to issue, even weaving around from one title to another—and back again—if I happened to remember.

After rereading the first FF yarn which graces the preceding pages, a slightly disturbing thought just hit me. Those of you who may be neophytes in the realm of comicdom might, with some justification, ask what all the shouting was about. Certainly, looking back at the strip, more than a decade later, the artwork seems to be an unlikely candidate for some future Sistine Chapel, while the quality of the writing will hardly be a threat to the reputation of Dickens or Hugo.

But if you were familiar with the comic-book genre in those halcyon days of yore, you'd possibly have reacted the way so many thousands of other startled readers did when they suddenly realized they were reading a superhero saga that was extravagantly different from those that had gone before. And it was that very difference that started it all.

For example, in the early strip we tried to give some dimension to the melancholy Moleman. Remember where he explains how he reached his underground kingdom on Monster Isle—and why? Didn't you find yourself sympathizing with him, just a bit? There he was, ostracized by his fellow man—and woman—because his physical appearance left a little something to be desired. He couldn't find acceptance in our world, so he set out to find another—one which might have a place for him. Now this was hardly reaching the dramatic heights of a Kafka, but it was almost unheard of in a comic book. Heretofore, villains were villains just because they were vil-

lains. Comics merely had good guys and bad guys, and nobody ever bothered with the whys or wherefores. But here, in the first fateful issue of The Fantastic Four, our readers were given a villain with whom they might empathize—a villain who was driven to what he had done by the slings and arrows of a heartless, heedless humanity. It was a first. It was an attempt to portray a three-dimensional character in a world that had been composed of stereotypes. To comic bookdom, it was tantamount to the invention of the wheel.

Similarly, the episode where Ben Grimm and Reed Richards begin to fight after their rocket ship has crash landed—and where Ben tells Reed, "You don't have to make a speech, big shot," as well as the other instances scattered throughout the strip where Ben is caustic and abrasive to Reed and the world in general—all these negative touches had been virtually unknown to comic books till then. Members of superhero teams were always the best of friends, with never a cross word between them. Good guys were never sarcastic, never bitter; yet here was a team with a raving malcontent, one whose paranoia was to increase with succeeding issues.

I might as well call your attention to the dialogue, also. While it's a far cry from Paddy Chayefsky, you may notice the definite effort that was made to have people speak as much as possible like real flesh-and-blood humans, whether they were cab drivers, policemen, garage mechanics, pilots, or whatever. While reasonably natural dialogue is so much a part of writing that I feel foolish even mentioning it, you must remember that we're talking about a form of the media and a time period where "So! You wanna play, huh?" was formerly considered a meaningful, profound exclamation when uttered by a hero in the process of being pummeled by a villain or two.

As a matter of fact, it was in order to demonstrate how our attempt to inject realism into our stories—through both characterization and dialogue—grew progressively stronger and more successful and to show how the quality of the artwork improved measurably from issue to issue that I've included the more recent "When Strikes the Silver Surfer," as well as the other strips you'll encounter in this titanic tome as we hurtle along on our jocular journey through Marvel's beginning. So don't go away—especially since we're about to zero in on The Incredible Hulk.

Speaking of The Hulk—and it's about time we did—I know you'll be whelmed to learn that he was the second one created in Marvel's

growing stable of slightly sanguinary superstars. As each succeeding issue of The Fantastic Four increased in sales and in popularity, we felt it behooved us no longer to deny a breathlessly waiting mankind the indescribable pleasure of another mighty Marvel superhero.

But I seem to hear you ask, "How did you know The Fantastic Four was growing in popularity? Sales we can understand. But how do you gauge a magazine's popularity?" Good question. I was hoping you'd ask.

Prior to The Fantastic Four, fan mail was almost unknown to us. Oh, we might have received a letter or two during the year, but it was always this type: "Dear Editor, I bought a copy of Kid Colt Outlaw and there was one staple missing from the binding. I want my money back." Hardly what you'd call a flood of fan mail.

But no sooner did *FF* #1 hit the stands than we actually started to receive letters that said something. "Loved your new mag. All you've gotta do is make Reed Richards less stuffy—and show us more of The Invisible Girl." "The Thing's the best character I ever saw. I hope he'll stop being a monster real soon." "How does The Human Torch burst into flame? What makes him fly? Why don't you give him his own magazine?"

It was one of the most exciting things that ever happened to us. We found out that there were actually real live readers out there—readers who took the trouble to contact us, readers who wanted to talk to us about our characters, about our stories. With each new letter they got to know us better, and what was more important, we got to know them. We learned what they liked, what they didn't like, what they wanted to see more of . . . and less of. After a while I began to feel I wasn't even the editor; I was just following orders—orders which came in the mail. And one request which was repeated with ever-increasing frequency was "When will you bring out another new superhero book?"

Finally, we had to yield to the burgeoning blandishments of our legion of pen pals. But what was our next effort to be? Admittedly, we had struck pay dirt by introducing a series featuring an iconoclastic team of superheroes. But I didn't want us to get into a rut. I was determined that our next production not concern itself with another team. After all, our fans (and what a kick it was to be able to think of them as fans rather than merely readers) kept referring to us as innovators, and I wasn't about to let anything change their minds.

Okay. There I was at my desk, a brand-new sheet of paper in my typewriter, ready to begin anew the agony of creation. What kind of hero was the comic-book reading world waiting for? What could we come up with that would take fandom by storm? How about an Errol Flynn type? Or a Gary Cooper? But then that little voice kept whispering inside my head, "Be innovative. Be original. They expect you to come up with something that's different."

Let me digress for a moment. I do a lot of lecturing at colleges around the country. Nowadays, almost a generation after the start of Marvel Comics, more than one-third of our readers are of college age—though that's a subject for another book. Anyway, there's always a lively questions-and-answers session after each dazzling dissertation, and the one question which is most frequently asked of me is "Where do you get your ideas?" I suppose that's asked of most writers, artists, and various other categories of people engaged in creative endeavors. Well, I've had plenty of opportunity to give that question a lot of thought and the answer I always give may not quite be the one you'd expect.

Actually, ideas have always been the easiest part of my various chores. In the comic-book field especially, almost anything can be a viable idea. Each day's assortment of readers' mail contains enough ideas to keep us in business for centuries. Unfortunately, however, ideas are only the tip of the iceberg. The crucial point is what use you make of the ideas. Let's take The Hulk as an example . . .

I had pretty much decided to let our second Marvel-style magazine feature someone with superhuman strength. But there had been, and still were, many such characters at that time, with National Comics' Superman as the first that comes to mind. Certainly there would be nothing terribly original about someone who had the strength of Superman. But that's where the fun came in. It would be my job to take a cliché concept and make it seem new and fresh, exciting and relevant.

Once again I decided that Jack Kirby would be the artist to breathe life into our latest creation. He had already gained an enthusiastic coterie of fans with his interpretation of The Fantastic Four and was more than capable of doing an additional feature strip or two. So the next time we met I outlined the concept that I'd been toying with for weeks.

It was patently apparent that The Thing was the most popular character in The Fantastic Four, and quite possibly in the entire comic-book field. Not only did the readers like him best, but he grabbed me, too. For a long time I'd been aware of the fact that people were more likely to favor someone who was less than perfect —someone with feet of clay with whom they could identify. Why was Humphrey Bogart more popular than so many taller, smoother leading men with perfect collar-ad features—leading men whose names are now forgotten? Why the stronger-than-ever cult for the universal "little guy," the world's champion all-time loser, Charlie Chaplin? It's a safe bet that you remember Quasimodo, but how easily can you name any of the heroic, handsomer, more glamorous characters in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame?* And then there's Frankenstein—and he's the one I've been leading up to.

I've always had a soft spot in my heart for the Frankenstein monster. No one could ever convince me that he was the bad guy, the villain, or the menace. It was he who was sinned against by those who feared him, by those whose first instinct was to strike out blindly at whatever they couldn't comprehend. He never wanted to hurt anyone; he merely groped his tortuous way through a second life trying to defend himself, trying to come to terms with those who sought to destroy him.

I suppose you can guess where we're heading. Think of the challenge it would be to make a hero out of a monster. We would have a protagonist with superhuman strength, but he wouldn't be all-wise, all-noble, all-infallible. (How's *that* for a rollicking redundancy?) We would use the concept of the Frankenstein monster, but update it. Our hero would be a scientist, transformed into a raging behemoth by a nuclear accident. And—since I was willing to borrow from Frankenstein, I decided I might as well borrow from Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde as well—our protagonist would constantly change from his normal identity to his superhuman alter ego and back again.

Now all that remained was to find a name. Racking my brain for all the appellations that would describe a gargantuan creature, a being of awesome strength coupled with a dull and sluggish thinking process, I couldn't seem to find the right word. I looked in the dictionary and the thesaurus, but nothing was on target. I knew I needed a perfect name for a monstrous, potentially murderous hulking brute

who—and then I stopped. It was the word "hulking" that did it. It conjured up the perfect mental image. I knew I had found his name. He had to be: The Hulk.

As I described him to Jack, I was envisioning a somewhat nice-looking monster, big and brutish enough to make him feared by all who met him and yet with a certain tragic appeal that would make our readers care about him and cheer him on. Not the easiest of goals perhaps, but I had a feeling we could do it.

Incidentally, as you read the strip which follows, you'll notice that I had Jack introduce a "teenage sidekick" type of character—just the type whom I had earlier said I couldn't stand. But we did it for a reason. He was a necessary catalyst in the creation of The Hulk, and he also gave me a chance to demonstrate that it was possible to introduce a teenager into a comic-book series without making him a cloying, simpy extension of the hero's personality. Remember, at Marvel we like to do things differently.

One final note before I again turn you loose. As an added fillip, I thought it would be interesting to have The Hulk's skin change color when he reverted to his monstrous self. Thinking it would be intensely dramatic-looking and somber, I arranged to have his body take on a gray hue in the first issue of his new magazine. But, as soon as the advance copies reached us, I realized the effect was entirely different from what I had intended. In some of the scenes his gray skin color gave him a chameleonlike quality; the printer didn't seem able to give him a consistent shade of gray from page to page, or even from panel to panel. In fact, his skin was light gray in some places and almost black in others. There were a few panels where he seemed red, and for some reason which nobody could explain, in one close-up toward the end of our little epic he was bright emerald green. As you may have already surmised, it became painfully apparent to me that gray was not the happiest color choice I might have made.

Shortly thereafter, a seemingly rational comic-book writer spent long, anguished minutes pacing his not-quite-sumptuous office trying to determine the proper skin color for a fictional monster. Then, mainly because there were no other emerald-skinned rampagers extant at that particular time, the color I finally opted for was a bravely bedazzling basic green.

In the strip that follows, which is the very first Hulk offering ever bestowed upon a grateful citizenry, we've taken the liberty of coloring

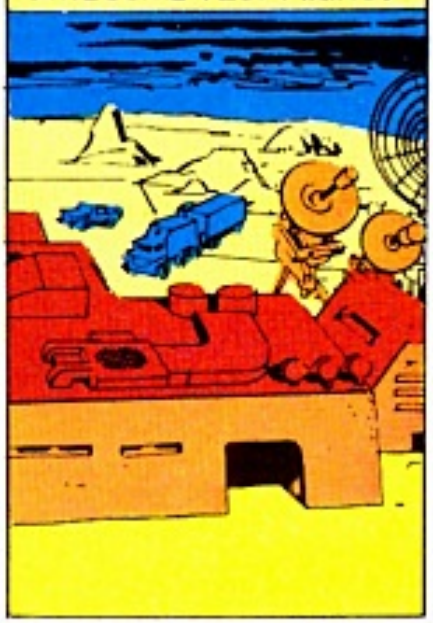
him that same shade of green, since this is the way he is presently known to both friend and foe alike. However, to satisfy the archivists and the purists among you, The Hulk cover which accompanies this daring denouement is depicted in its original gray, as Marvel constantly strives to bring you the very best of both possible worlds.

IND.
12¢
THE INCREDIBLE
HULK
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MC
1
MAY
THE STRANGEST MAN OF ALL TIME!!
IS HE MAN OR MONSTER
OR...
IS HE BOTH
FANTASY AS YOU LIKE IT!

THE HULK
By—
Stan Lee & J. KIRBY
HALF-MAN, HALF-MONSTER, THE MIGHTY HULK THUNDERS OUT OF THE NIGHT TO TAKE HIS PLACE AMONG THE MOST AMAZING CHARACTERS OF ALL TIME!
PART 1
"THE COMING OF THE HULK"

ALONE IN THE DESERT STANDS THE MOST AWESOME WEAPON EVER CREATED BY MAN--*THE INCREDIBLE G-BOMB!*

MILES AWAY, BEHIND SOLID CONCRETE BUNKERS, A NERVOUS SCIENTIFIC TASK FORCE WAITS FOR THE GAMMA-BOMB'S FIRST AWESOME TEST FIRING!



AND NONE IS MORE TENSE, MORE WORRIED, THAN DR. BRUCE BANNER, THE MAN WHOSE GENIUS CREATED THE G-BOMB!

A FEW SECONDS MORE AND WE'LL KNOW WHETHER WE HAVE SUCCEEDED OR NOT!

I WAS AGAINST IT FROM THE START, BANNER, AND I STILL *AM!* IT IS *TOO DANGEROUS!*

I *STILL* SAY YOU SHOULD HAVE CONFIDED IN US, YOUR FELLOW SCIENTISTS! YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD US THE SECRET OF THE GAMMA RAY...

QUIET, IGOR! HERE COMES GENERAL ROSS!

WHY THE *DELAY* BANNER? WHAT ARE YOU *WAITING* FOR?

MY MEN HAVE BEEN STATIONED HERE FOR WEEKS, WASTING TIME BECAUSE OF YOUR INFERNAL DELAYS! ARE YOU GOING TO TEST THAT BLAMED BOMB OR *NOT?*

OF COURSE, GENERAL! IT'S JUST THAT I MUST BE SURE EVERY PRECAUTION HAS BEEN TAKEN! WE ARE TAMPERING WITH POWERFUL FORCES!

POWERFUL FORCES! *BAH!!* A BOMB IS A BOMB! THE TROUBLE WITH *YOU* IS YOU'RE A *MILKSOP!* YOU'VE GOT NO *GUTS!*

THEY SHOULD HAVE PUT *ME* IN CHARGE OF THIS TEST! BY THUNDER, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN *DONE* BY NOW!

OH DADDY, DON'T BE SO UNFAIR! DR. BRUCE BANNER IS ONE OF OUR MOST FAMOUS SCIENTISTS! I'M *SURE* HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING!

YOU KEEP OUT OF THIS, BETTY! THIS IS *MAN TALK!*

DON'T MIND DAD, DR. BANNER! EVER SINCE HE WAS NICKNAMED "THUNDERBOLT" ROSS, HE'S TRIED TO LIVE UP TO IT!

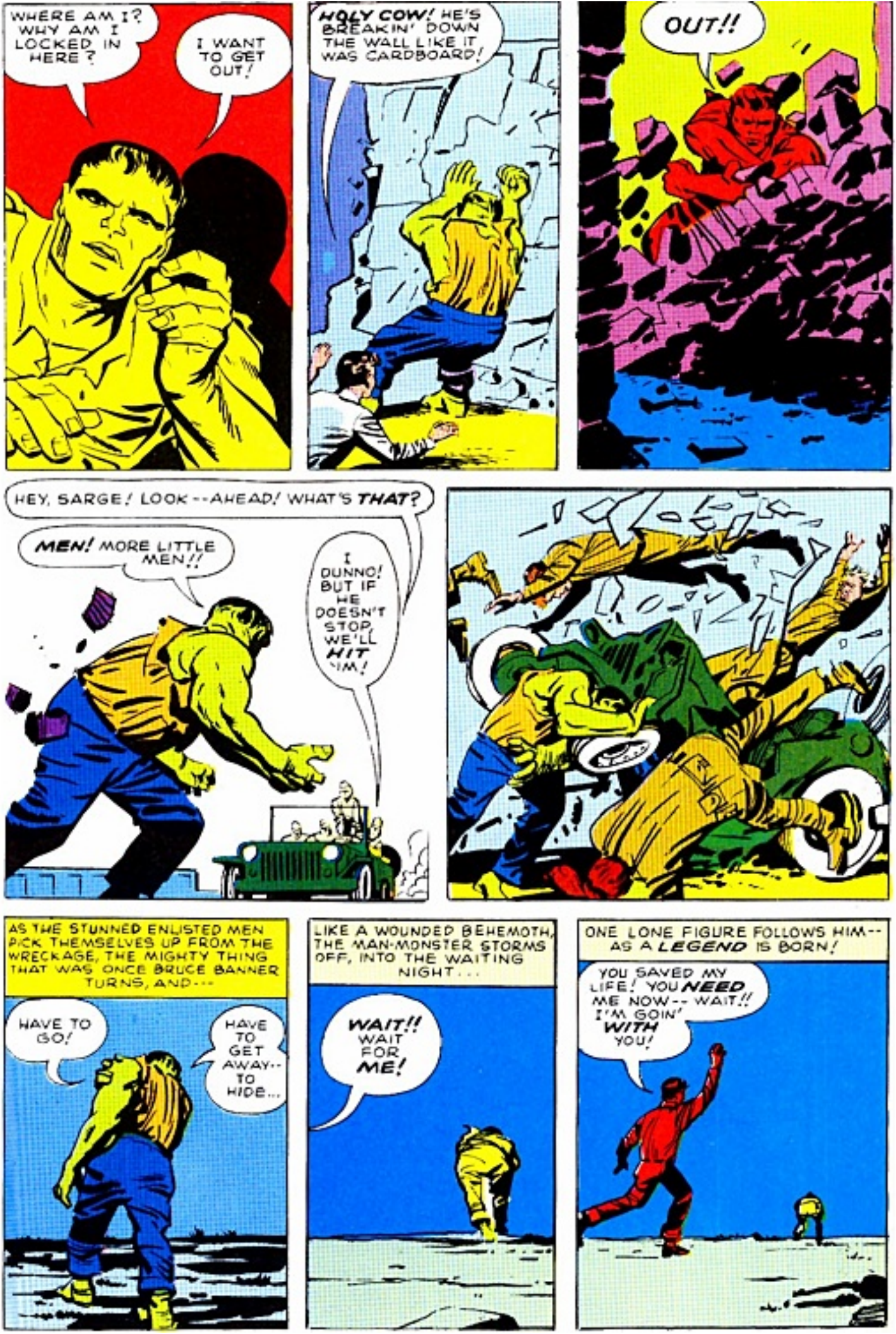
HRMMPHH!

THANK YOU, MISS ROSS!

AND NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, IT'S TIME FOR THE FINAL COUNTDOWN!
GOOD LUCK, DR. BANNER!
IT'S DING-DONG WELL ABOUT TIME!
LISTEN, BANNER, THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE TO TELL ME THE SECRET OF HARNESSING THE GAMMA RAYS! IT ISN'T RIGHT FOR YOU TO BE THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS!
SORRY, IGOR! THE FORMULAS ARE LOCKED IN MY ROOM, AND THEY WILL STAY THERE!
YOU FOOL! NOBODY HAS CHECKED YOUR WORK! IF YOU'VE MADE AN ERROR, YOU MIGHT BLOW UP HALF THE CONTINENT!! I OUGHTTA--
I DON'T MAKE ERRORS, IGOR!
DR. BANNER! THE COUNT-DOWN HAS BEGUN!
I'LL TALK TO YOU LATER, IGOR! YOU KNOW HOW I DETEST MEN WHO THINK WITH THEIR FISTS!
IN A FEW SECONDS WE WILL FINALLY LEARN WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE POWERFUL GAMMA RAYS ARE RELEASED!
WAIT! WHAT'S THAT?! GOOD LORD! IT'S A BOY! -- A TEEN-AGER! HE'S DRIVING INTO THE TEST AREA!
IGOR! DELAY THE COUNTDOWN UNTIL I CAN GET TO THAT BOY! HURRY, MAN! EVERY SECOND COUNTS!
SURE...
WHAT A STROKE OF LUCK! ALL I HAVE TO DO IS KEEP MY FINGER OFF THE "HOLD" BUTTON, AND IT'LL BE THE END OF BRUCE BANNER!

YOU! GET OUT OF THERE! YOU'RE IN A FORBIDDEN TEST AREA!
COOL IT, MAN! THE KIDS BET ME I WOULDN'T HAVE NERVE ENOUGH TO SNEAK PAST THE GUARDS...
HEY! WHAT ARE YA TRYIN' TO DO? MAKE THEM THINK I'M CHICKEN?
COME ON, YOU FOOL! WE'VE GOT TO REACH THE PROTECTIVE TRENCH BEFORE THE BOMB GOES OFF!
BOMB??
MEANWHILE, AT THE BUNKER, NOT HAVING BEEN TOLD, TO DELAY THE FIRING, A FINGER TOUCHES THE FATAL BUTTON!
THREE TWO ONE ZERO
FIRE
THERE! YOU'RE SAFE!
AND NOW I'LL---
AHHH
ALTHO' MANY MILES FROM BOMB ZERO, DR. BRUCE BANNER IS BATHED IN THE FULL FORCE OF THE MYSTERIOUS GAMMA RAYS!
THE WORLD SEEMS TO STAND STILL, TREMBLING ON THE BRINK OF INFINITY, AS HIS EAR-SPLITTING SCREAM FILLS THE AIR ...!
AND HE IS STILL SCREAMING, HOURS LATER, WHEN---
HE'S COMING OUT OF IT NOW!
THANK HEAVEN!
BANNER, IT'S A MIRACLE THAT YOU'RE STILL ALIVE! -- YOU ABSORBED THE FULL IMPACT OF THE GAMMA RAYS!
HOW-- HOW DID I GET HERE?
MY NAME IS RICK JONES... I BROUGHT YOU!
YOU SAVED MY DUMB LIFE ... I FIGGERED IT WAS THE LEAST I COULD DO FOR YOU!... Y'KNOW, IT'S A FUNNY THING ... I'M AN ORPHAN, AND NO ONE EVER DID ANYTHING FOR ME BEFORE--'CEPT YOU, A STRANGER!

IT'S GETTIN' DARK OUT! HOW LONG THEY GONNA KEEP US HERE, DOC?
I DON'T KNOW! I DON'T KNOW!! THEY MUST BE WAITING-- FOR ME TO DIE! IT ISN'T POSSIBLE TO TAKE SO MUCH GAMMA RADIATION, AND NOT HAVE SOMETHING HAPPEN!
I--I'M BEGINNING TO FEEL STRANGE! MY HEAD IS THROBBING! THIS MUST BE--THE END...
THE WHOLE WORLD'S GOING BATTY! EVEN THIS KOOKIE RADIO-- IT WON'T PLAY! ALL IT GIVES OUT WITH IS STATIC!
CLICK-- CLICK--
THAT'S NO RADIO! IT'S A GEIGER COUNTER!
IT MEASURES RADIATION! LISTEN TO IT! IT--IT'S GOING WILD!
CLICK-CLICK CLICK CLICK CLICK CLICK GLICK CLICK CLICK
IT'S GETTING LOUDER--AND LOUDER!!--FASTER AND FASTER!! WHAT'S HAPPENING??
CLICK CLICK CLICK CLICK
WHAT IS HAPPENING ??? ARGHH
CLICK CLICK CLICK CLICK
HEY! LOOK AT YOU! YOU-- CHANGED!
GET OUT OF MY WAY, INSECT!


WHERE AM I? WHY AM I LOCKED IN HERE?
I WANT TO GET OUT!
HOLY COW! HE'S BREAKIN' DOWN THE WALL LIKE IT WAS CARDBOARD!
OUT!!
HEY, SARGE! LOOK--AHEAD! WHAT'S THAT?
MEN! MORE LITTLE MEN!!
I DUNNO! BUT IF HE DOESN'T STOP WE'LL HIT 'IM!
AS THE STUNNED ENLISTED MEN PICK THEMSELVES UP FROM THE WRECKAGE, THE MIGHTY THING THAT WAS ONCE BRUCE BANNER TURNS, AND---
HAVE TO GO!
HAVE TO GET AWAY-- TO HIDE...
LIKE A WOUNDED BEHEMOTH, THE MAN-MONSTER STORMS OFF, INTO THE WAITING NIGHT...
WAIT!! WAIT FOR ME!
ONE LONE FIGURE FOLLOWS HIM-- AS A LEGEND IS BORN!
YOU SAVED MY LIFE! YOU NEED ME NOW-- WAIT!! I'M GOIN' WITH YOU!

PART 2
THE HULK STRIKES!
LIKE A SILENT DREADNAUGHT, THE HULKING THING THAT WAS ONCE BRUCE BANNER CROUCHES IN THE SHADOWS, AS THE PURSUING TROOPS RUSH BY...
MUSTN'T LET THEM FIND ME . . .

FAN OUT, MEN! WE'VE GOT TO FIND THAT--THAT HULK!!
AND THUS, A NAME IS GIVEN TO BRUCE BANNER'S OTHER SELF A NAME WHICH IS DESTINED TO BECOME--IMMORTAL!
LOOK SHARP THERE! DON'T LET THE HULK GET HIS HANDS ON YOU!
WHILE, BACK AT THE BASE HOSPITAL . . .
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE! NOTHING HUMAN COULD HAVE SMASHED A TWO FOOT THICK CONCRETE WALL!
BUT HE DID! THE HULK DID IT!
BRUCE BANNER AND THE BOY! WHAT BECAME OF THEM? COULD THE HULK HAVE--??
BUT WHO COULD EVER GUESS THE INCREDIBLE TRUTH? WHO COULD SUSPECT THAT BRUCE BANNER IS... THE HULK!!!
WH-WHERE IS HE HEADED FOR?
HAVE TO KEEP MOVING...
...HAVE TO REACH HOME! FORMULA INSIDE HOME! MUST GET FORMULA!!
DRIVEN BY SHEER INSTINCT, THE PART OF THE HULK WHICH IS STILL BRUCE BANNER HEADS FOR A SMALL COTTAGE, SMASHING ALL OBSTACLES IN HIS PATH!
MOVING WITH UNBELIEVABLE STEALTH FOR ONE SO PONDEROUS, HE STORMS CLOSER AND CLOSER TO HIS DESTINATION...
UNTIL, AT LAST, A DIM MEMORY FROM THE BRAIN OF BRUCE BANNER TELLS HIM...
THE THIRD CABIN! THAT IS WHERE I MUST GO!

BUT, WITHIN THE CABIN, THE MAN CALLED IGOR IS SO INTENT UPON A SECRET TASK, THAT HE DOESN'T HEAR THE MUFFLED FOOTSTEPS DRAWING NEARER AND NEARER...
THE GAMMA RAY FORMULA MUST BE HERE SOMEWHERE!
AND THEN...
AN INTRUDER! WELL, YOU WILL NOT LIVE TO REPORT IGOR TO THE SECURITY POLICE!
WHA--WHAT ARE YOU?? I HAVE PUT A .38 SLUG IN YOUR SHOULDER, AND STILL YOU ADVANCE!!
YOU-- YOU DID NOT EVEN FEEL THE SHOT!
NO! STAY BACK!! DON'T-- DON'T!!
YOU WILL SHOOT ME NO MORE!
GO! THIS IS WHAT THE PUNY HUMANS FEAR!
AND NOW---
NO! IT'S IMPOSSIBLE! YOU-- YOU AREN'T HUMAN!
HUMAN?? WHY SHOULD I WANT TO BE HUMAN?!?

STOP IT! DON'T! YOU'LL KILL HIM!
HELP!!
DOWN? I WILL PUT HIM DOWN!
PUT 'IM DOWN!
SO!!
WHAM!
GOSH! LOOK!! THERE'S SOMETHING TAPED TO THE BOTTOM OF THAT GLASS BEAKER! IT MUST BE WHAT HE WAS SEARCHING FOR!
TOP SECRET
REPORT ON GAMMA RAY BOMB
IT LOOKS IMPORTANT! WE BETTER GET IT TO THE ARMY! I'LL BET YOU WROTE IT WHILE YOU WERE BRUCE BANNER!
BRUCE BANNER! WHY DO THOSE WORDS STAY IN MY HEAD?? WHAT IS THAT NAME TO ME??
THAT FACE! I -- I KNOW THAT FACE!!
BUT IT IS WEAK--SOFT!! I HATE IT! TAKE IT AWAY!
YOU CAN'T HATE IT!
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? THIS GUY IN THE PICTURE-- BEFORE YOU CHANGED, HE WAS --- YOU!!

I -- I SEEM TO REMEMBER NOW! IT WAS THE BOMB! THE GAMMA RAYS! THEY TURNED ME INTO -- THIS -- WHEN DARKNESS FELL!
IT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED TO ME IF YOU HADN'T SAVED ME! THAT'S WHY I'M STAYIN' WITH YOU!
FOOL! I AM GLAD IT HAPPENED!! I'D RATHER BE ME, THAN THAT PUNY WEAKLING IN THE PICTURE!
I DON'T WANT YOU WITH ME! I DON'T NEED YOU! I DON'T NEED ANYBODY! WITH MY STRENGTH -- MY POWER -- THE WORLD IS MINE!
AS FOR YOU -- YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS WHO I REALLY AM!
WHA -- WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
BUT, AT THAT VERY INSTANT, THE FIRST RAYS OF DAWN APPEAR! AND WITH THEM --
MY HEAD!!
MY BRAIN -- IT'S ON FIRE!
WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ME? I -- I'M CHANGING!!
CHANGING ---
IT -- IT FEELS AS THOUGH A VEIL HAS LIFTED -- I CAN THINK AGAIN!
IT'S OVER! THE NIGHTMARE IS OVER!
GOSH! YOU -- YOU'RE DOCTOR BRUCE BANNER AGAIN!
BUT, ALAS, THE NIGHTMARE OF BRUCE BANNER IS NOT YET OVER! IT MAY NEVER BE OVER AGAIN!
OPEN UP IN THERE!
THIS IS THE POLICE!

PART 3
THE SEARCH FOR THE HULK
Stan Lee + J. KIRBY
WHERE IS HE? WHERE'S THE HULK?
HE'S GOT TO BE IN HERE SOME-WHERE!
DOCTOR BANNER!
THE HULK?
THEY MUST MEAN YOU, DOC!
MP
EMPTY!!
BUT WE TRAILED HIM HERE! WE KNOW HE CAME IN HERE!
LOOK, CAPTAIN! IT'S IGOR, THE SPY WE'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR!
THE HULK!! ...THE HULK--
GET HIM TO A DOCTOR! HE MUST HAVE BEEN IN LEAGUE WITH THE HULK!

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU, DOCTOR BANNER? WHY DID YOU LEAVE THE HOSPITAL? HOW DID YOU GET THAT SHOULDER WOUND?
HOW DO WE KNOW YOU'RE NOT MIXED UP IN THIS?
ARE YOU KIDDIN'?! WHAT DO YOU THINK HE IS... THE HULK?!
CAPTAIN, WE WERE IN THE JEEP WHICH HIT THE HULK! WE GOT A GOOD LOOK AT HIM!
HE WAS NOTHING LIKE DR. BANNER!
HE WAS HUGE, POWERFUL! IN FACT, I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF HE WAS A GIANT GORILLA THAT ESCAPED FROM SOME ZOO!
NO, HE WAS MORE LIKE A BIG BEAR, DRESSED IN TATTERS! PROBABLY ESCAPED FROM A CIRCUS SOMEWHERE!
PERSONALLY, I THINK YOU JOKERS WERE SEEIN' THINGS! HE WAS JUST A LITTLE CUB SCOUT ON PATROL!
IT'S FORTUNATE THAT IGOR DID NOT GET YOUR GAMMA BOMB FORMULA! I'LL TAKE IT FOR SAFE-KEEPING!
MINUTES LATER, AFTER THE TROOPS HAVE LEFT TO CONTINUE THEIR VAIN SEARCH FOR THE HULK...
DOCTOR BANNER, I RETURNED TO APOLOGIZE FOR MY FATHER'S REMARKS TO YOU! BUT I NEVER EXPECTED TO FIND...
TO FIND ME IN THE MIDDLE OF A SEARCH FOR A-- MONSTER?
NEITHER DID I! NEITHER -SOB- DID I!
YOU'RE ILL! YOU NEED MEDICAL CARE!
NO HE DOESN'T LADY! HE JUST NEEDS A LITTLE PEACE AND QUIET, THAT'S ALL!

MISS ROSS, FORGIVE ME! I'VE--BEEN UNDER A TERRIBLE STRAIN! RICK WILL SHOW YOU TO THE DOOR!
SURE, DOC! YOU JUST TAKE IT EASY!
VERY WELL... I'LL GO! BUT, IF YOU SHOULD NEED ME--
MISS ROSS--BETTY--I'LL CALL YOU LATER--AFTER I'VE HAD A CHANCE TO PULL MYSELF TOGETHER!
OH, IT'S BETTY NOW! BAH! HOW REVOLTIN!
PLEASE DO...BRUCE! I FEEL YOU'RE IN SOME GREAT TROUBLE, AND--I WANT TO HELP!
BOY! I THOUGHT THEY'D NEVER LEAVE! NOW WE CAN TALK!
WHAT DID IT FEEL LIKE, DOC, BEIN THE HULK? I'LL BET IT WAS A GAS!
SAY! WHAT'S WRONG? IT'S ALL OVER NOW, ISN'T IT?
OVER? NO, RICK, IT ISN'T OVER! IT'S JUST... BEGINNING!
REMEMBER, I BECAME THE HULK WHEN NIGHT FELL, AND RETURNED TO MY NORMAL SELF AT DAY-BREAK! BUT DAY DOESN'T LAST FOREVER! IT WILL SOON BE NIGHT AGAIN...
...AND WHEN THE SUN SETS, HOW DO I KNOW I WON'T CHANGE ONCE MORE? HOW DO I KNOW I WON'T KEEP CHANGING...
...INTO THAT BRUTAL, BESTIAL MOCKERY OF A HUMAN--THAT CREATURE WHICH FEARS NOTHING--WHICH DESPISES REASON AND WORSHIPS POWER!
SOON, THE SUN WILL SET AGAIN! AND HERE I SIT, HELPLESSLY, FEARING I MAY AGAIN BECOME--THE HULK!!

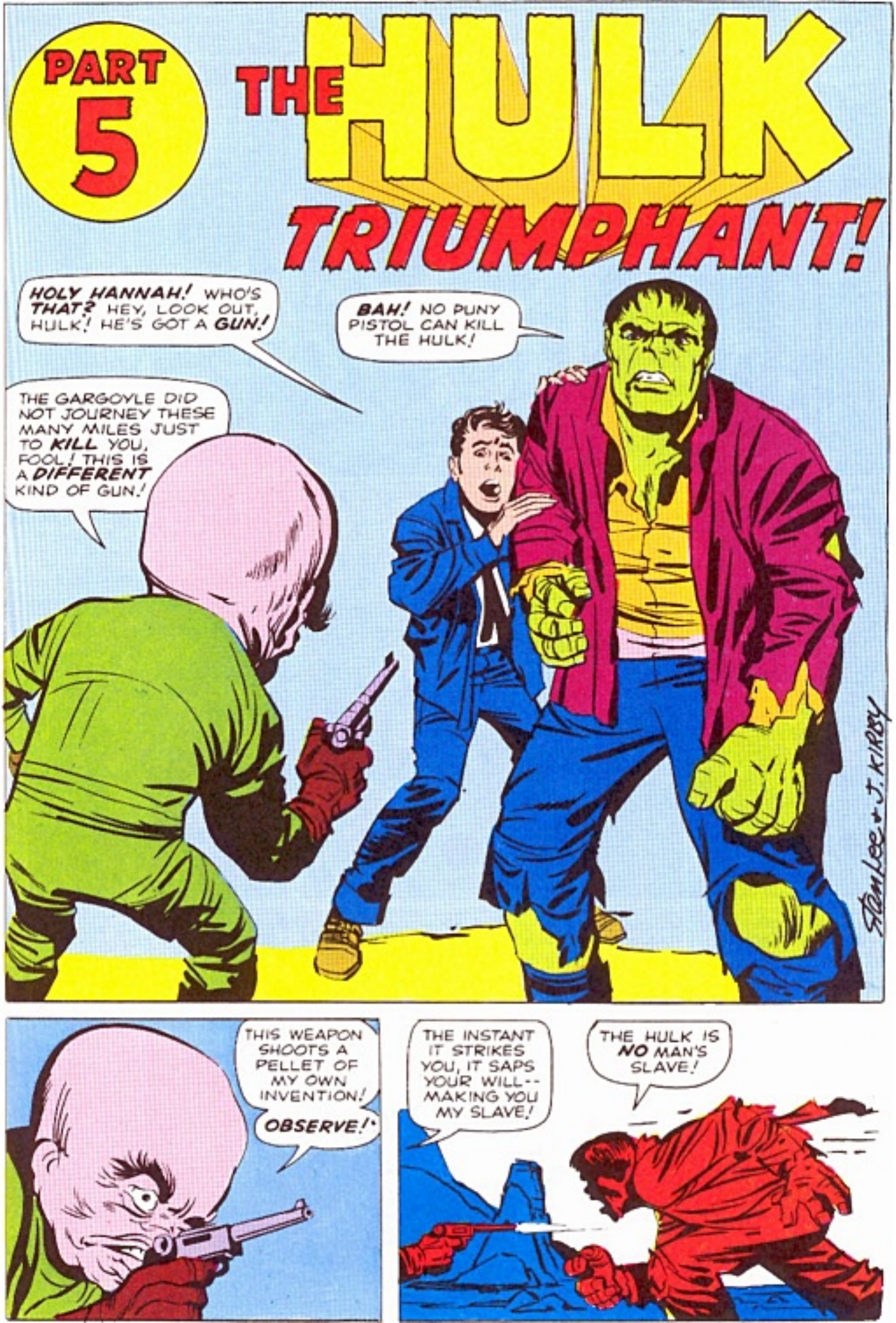
THE HULK
"ENTER... THE GARGOYLE!"
STAN LEE + J. KIRBY
PART 4
LET US LEAVE BRUCE BANNER AND HIS YOUNG FRIEND RICK FOR A MOMENT, AND TURN OUR ATTENTION TO THE RED SPY KNOWN AS IGOR AS HE BROODS DARKLY IN HIS CELL...
THE AMERICAN FOOLS THINK I AM DEFEATED! BUT NOT YET!! NO--THEY SHALL SOON LEARN THAT EVEN IN A CELL, IGOR CAN BE DANGEROUS!
FOR THEY DO NOT SUSPECT THAT PASTED ONTO MY THUMB-NAIL IS A SUB-MINIATURE TRANSISTOR SHORT WAVE SENDING SET!
A SET WITH WHICH I SHALL NOW SEND A SECRET MESSAGE TO BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN!
AND, THOUSANDS OF MILES AWAY...
COMRADE!! I AM RECEIVING A CODE MESSAGE FROM IGOR!
QUICK! LET ME HAVE IT!

HMMMM! THIS IS HIGH-PRIORITY! I MUST GIVE IT TO... THE GARGOYLE!
BUT I DARE NOT FACE THE TERRIFYING ONE!! AHH! I HAVE THE ANSWER!
WAIT! WHY DO YOU GIVE ME THIS MESSAGE?? WHY DO YOU NOT BRING IT TO THE GARGOYLE?
YOU ARE MY SUPERIOR, COMRADE! IT IS FOR YOU TO BRING IT!
I CANNOT BEAR TO FACE THE GARGOYLE! THERE IS BUT ONE THING TO DO!
COMRADE! DO NOT ASK ME TO DO THIS! I BEG YOU--
DO IT!! IT IS AN ORDER!
THE GARGOYLE! THE MOST FEARED MAN IN ALL OF AGIA!!
WHO IS OUTSIDE MY DOOR?? SPEAK!! OR FACE THE GARGOYLE'S WRATH!!
I-- I HAVE A MESSAGE FOR YOU, COMRADE GARGOYLE! THAT IS ALL!
THE COWARDLY WEAKLINGS DARE NOT FACE ME! BUT THAT IS HOW I WANT IT!!
LET THEM FEAR ME! SOME DAY ALL THE WORLD WILL TREMBLE BEFORE THE GARGOYLE!
THIS MESSAGE! IT IS UNBELIEVABLE! IN AMERICA, THERE EXISTS A CREATURE CALLED THE HULK, WHOSE POWER ALMOST MATCHES MINE!
I MUST FIND THIS HULK!! I MUST EITHER SLAY HIM, OR BRING HIM BACK AS MY PRISONER, AS A SYMBOL OF MY MIGHT!
ATTENTION! THIS IS THE GARGOYLE! PREPARE A ROCKET-FIRING SUB FOR IMMEDIATE DEPARTURE! THAT IS ALL!

BRIEF HOURS LATER, THE VERY LATEST MODEL RED SUB CUTS THRU THE MURKY DEPTHS OF THE SEA...
UNTIL, REACHING A PRE-ARRANGED AREA, IT UNLEASHES AN EXPERIMENTAL MAN-CARRYING ROCKET!
WHAT'S THAT?? OUR RADAR HAS TRACKED AN UNIDENTIFIED MISSILE HEADING THIS WAY??!
UNLEASH OUR HUNTER MISSILES!
WITHIN SECONDS, AMERICA'S MIGHTY DEFENSE STRUCTURE UNLEASHES ITS FANTASTIC ARSENAL, AND...
THE MISSILE IS DESTROYED! BUT I HAVE LANDED AT MY DESTINATION SAFELY!
AND NOW... IT IS TIME FOR THE GARGOYLE TO MEET... THE HULK!
AND SO, FATE TWISTS THE THREADS OF OUR TALE TIGHTER AND TIGHTER, UNTIL...
WHERE ARE YOU GOING, DOC? IT'LL BE EVENING SOON! SHOULDN'T WE BE AT HOME, WAITING TO SEE--?
NO, RICK! IF I AM DESTINED TO BECOME THAT INHUMAN CREATURE AGAIN, LET IT HAPPEN OUT IN THE OPEN THIS TIME!
IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE, DOC! YOU'RE THE MOST FAMOUS MISSILE EXPERT IN THE WORLD! YOU'RE BRAINY AND CULTURED, AND ALL THAT JAZZ! AND YET...
AND YET, DUE TO THE FORCES UNLEASHED BY THE GAMMA RAY, I TURN INTO A MARAUDING, SAVAGE BRUTE, AT NIGHTFALL!

THAT'S WHY I GOTTA STAY WITH YOU, DOC.! WITHOUT ME AROUND, YOU MIGHT DO SOMETHING AWFUL! YOU MIGHT EVEN KILL SOMEONE, DR.--DOC.!! YOUR HANDS!!
THEY'RE CHANGING! YOU'RE BECOMING THE HULK AGAIN!
JUST AS I FEARED! I CANNOT STOP IT!! IT--IT WILL HAPPEN EVERY EVENING!
DOC.!! KEEP YOUR HANDS ON THE WHEEL!! LOOK OUT!!
WHEEL? WHO CARES ABOUT THE WHEEL??
WHO CARES ABOUT... ANYTHING ?!!
THUD!
SLOWLY, PONDEROUSLY, FROM OUT OF THE WRECKAGE, A HEAD EMERGES! BUT, NOT THE SENSITIVE, CLEAN-CUT HEAD OF DR. BRUCE BANNER! NO-- THIS IS THE BRUTISH, MENACING HEAD OF--THE HULK!!
WHAT AM I DOING HERE? GOT TO GO! GO--WHERE??
OHH... MY HEAD!! WE-WE'RE LUCKY TO BE ALIVE!
I KNOW THIS COUNTRYSIDE! NEAR GENERAL ROSS'S HOUSE! BETTY LIVES THERE--BETTY!!
NO! WAIT! YOU CAN'T SEE BETTY! NOT LIKE THIS! STOP!
MY QUEST IS ENDED! IT IS HE! THE ONE I SEEK... THE HULK!

MEANWHILE, JUST A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY, BETTY ROSS IS LOST IN HER OWN DISTURBED MUSINGS...
I CAN'T GET BRUCE BANNER OUT OF MY MIND!!
SOMEHOW, I FEEL HE--NEEDS ME!
WHAT IS IT, GIRL? YOU'VE SEEMED TROUBLED ALL DAY!
OH, DAD... IF ONLY THINGS WERE AS SIMPLE AS IN YOUR DAY, WHEN A CAVALRY CHARGE, OR A SQUAD OF INFANTRYMEN COULD SOLVE ANYTHING!
BUT TODAY, WITH THE STRANGE, ALMOST SUPERNATURAL FORCES ALL AROUND US, I FEEL AS THOUGH WE'RE ON THE BRINK OF SOME FANTASTIC UNIMAGINABLE ADVENTURE!
HONEY, YOU JUST NEED A LITTLE FRESH AIR!
DAD'S RIGHT! PERHAPS A WALK IN THE CRISP NIGHT AIR WILL CLEAR MY HEAD--WILL DRIVE THE TROUBLED FACE OF BRUCE BANNER FROM MY THOUGHTS!
AND PERHAPS I CAN TELL MYSELF IT WAS ALL A DREAM--THERE IS NO HULK!
BUT THERE IS A HULK!! AND DON'T YOU EVER FORGET IT!!
OH--NO!
FAINTED!! BAH! JUST LIKE ALL WEAK, HELPLESS CREATURES!
HULK--LET GO OF HER!
YOU'VE GOT TO LEAVE HERE! IF YOU'RE FOUND THIS TIME, THEY'LL--
SHUT UP! NOBODY TELLS THE HULK!
YOU ARE WRONG, MONSTER! TURN AROUND! TURN AND FACE--THE GARGOYLE!


PART 5
THE HULK
TRIUMPHANT!
HOLY HANNAH! WHO'S THAT? HEY, LOOK OUT, HULK! HE'S GOT A GUN!
BAH! NO PUNY PISTOL CAN KILL THE HULK!
THE GARGOYLE DID NOT JOURNEY THESE MANY MILES JUST TO KILL YOU, FOOL! THIS IS A DIFFERENT KIND OF GUN!
STAN LEE • J. KIRBY
THIS WEAPON SHOOTS A PELLET OF MY OWN INVENTION!
OBSERVE!
THE INSTANT IT STRIKES YOU, IT SAPS YOUR WILL-- MAKING YOU MY SLAVE!
THE HULK IS NO MAN'S SLAVE!

HAH! THE GARGOYLE IS NEVER WRONG!
AND THOUGH YOU SEEM TOO UNIMPORTANT TO WASTE ANOTHER PELLET ON, I BELIEVE IN TAKING NO CHANCES!

IT IS DONE! BOTH OF YOU... RISE, AND FOLLOW ME!
RISE...

FORTUNATELY, IN THE EXCITEMENT OF THE MOMENT, THE GARGOYLE DOES NOT NOTICE THE UNCONSCIOUS GIRL LYING IN THE SHADOWS BEHIND HIS TWO HELPLESS PRISONERS!
HOW EASY IT IS FOR THE GARGOYLE TO BE VICTORIOUS!

AND MOMENTS LATER...
BETTY! BETTY!
DAD... IT-- IT WAS HORRIBLE!

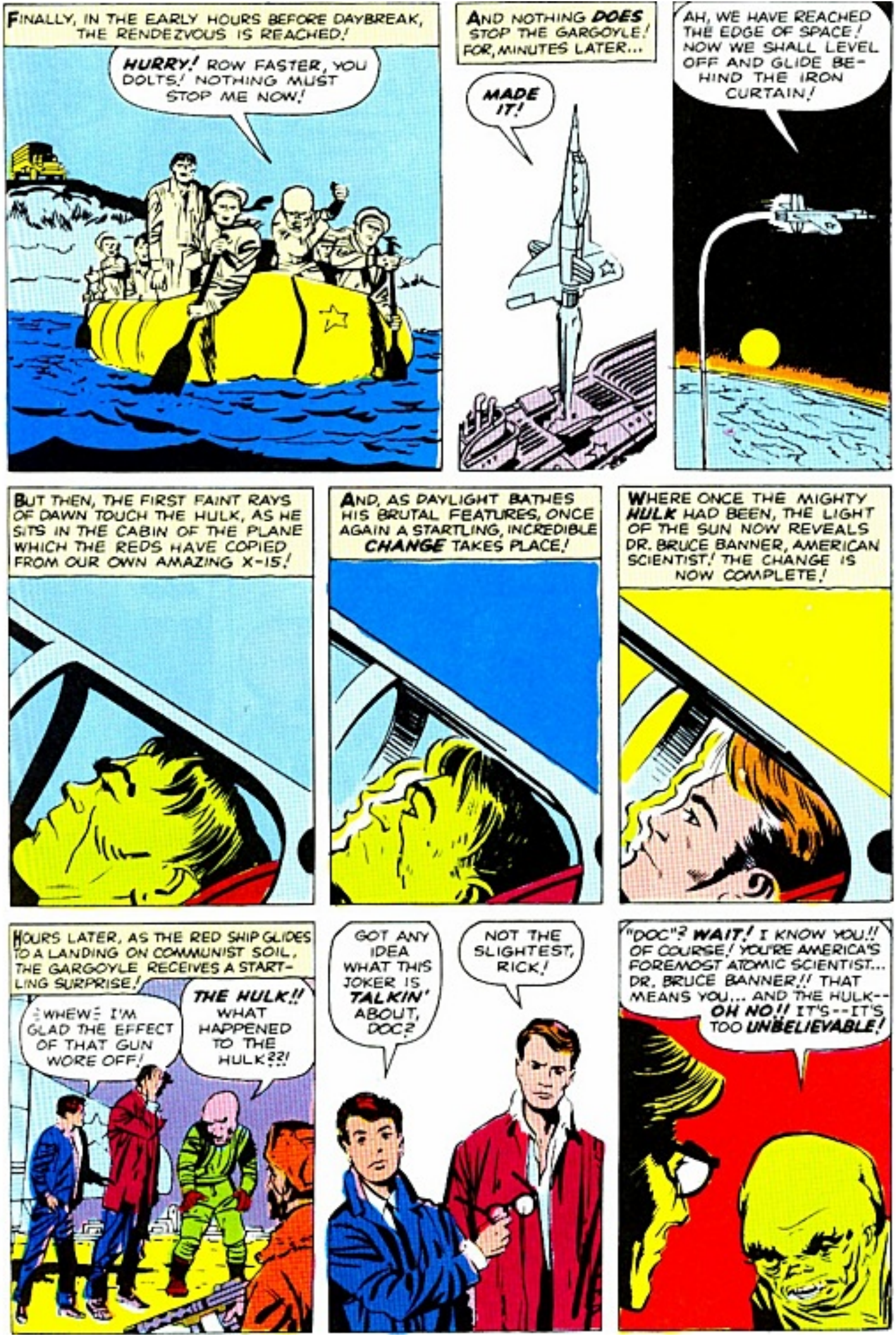
IT WAS THE HULK! HE CAME FROM OUT OF THE DARKNESS! HE--HE WAS TERRIFYING!
THERE, THERE, MY DEAR! YOU'RE SAFE NOW!

BUT WHERE DID HE GO? WHAT DID HE WANT? OR--OR DID I IMAGINE THE WHOLE THING?
I'LL FIND HIM, BETTY! I SWEAR TO YOU, MY CHILD, I'LL FIND HIM AND DESTROY HIM!

AND YET, IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING, THERE WAS SOMETHING... SOMETHING SAD ABOUT HIM!! ALMOST AS THOUGH HE WAS SEEKING... HELP!
I'LL FIND HIM! IF IT TAKES AN ETERNITY, I'LL FIND THAT MONSTER!

AND, IN A SPEEDING TRUCK, DRIVEN BY A DRIVER WHOSE WILL HAS ALSO BEEN SAPPED, THE GARGOYLE AND HIS PRISONERS SPEED TOWARD THE COAST... RACING TO REACH THEIR DESTINATION BEFORE THE DAWN!
FASTER! FASTER!

WHAT A PRIZE THE HULK WILL BE!! WHAT A FANTASTIC SPECIMAN FOR OUR SCIENTISTS TO STUDY! IF WE COULD CREATE AN ARMY OF SUCH POWERFUL CREATURES, WE COULD RULE THE EARTH!


FINALLY, IN THE EARLY HOURS BEFORE DAYBREAK, THE RENDEZVOUS IS REACHED!
HURRY! ROW FASTER, YOU DOLTS! NOTHING MUST STOP ME NOW!
AND NOTHING DOES STOP THE GARGOYLE! FOR, MINUTES LATER...
MADE IT!
AH, WE HAVE REACHED THE EDGE OF SPACE! NOW WE SHALL LEVEL OFF AND GLIDE BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN!
BUT THEN, THE FIRST FAINT RAYS OF DAWN TOUCH THE HULK, AS HE SITS IN THE CABIN OF THE PLANE WHICH THE REDS HAVE COPIED FROM OUR OWN AMAZING X-15!
AND, AS DAYLIGHT BATHES HIS BRUTAL FEATURES, ONCE AGAIN A STARTLING, INCREDIBLE CHANGE TAKES PLACE!
WHERE ONCE THE MIGHTY HULK HAD BEEN, THE LIGHT OF THE SUN NOW REVEALS DR. BRUCE BANNER, AMERICAN SCIENTIST! THE CHANGE IS NOW COMPLETE!
HOURS LATER, AS THE RED SHIP GLIDES TO A LANDING ON COMMUNIST SOIL, THE GARGOYLE RECEIVES A STARTLING SURPRISE!
WHEW! I'M GLAD THE EFFECT OF THAT GUN WORE OFF!
THE HULK!! WHAT HAPPENED TO THE HULK?!?!
GOT ANY IDEA WHAT THIS JOKER IS TALKIN' ABOUT, DOC?
NOT THE SLIGHTEST, RICK!
"DOC"? WAIT! I KNOW YOU!! OF COURSE! YOU'RE AMERICA'S FOREMOST ATOMIC SCIENTIST... DR. BRUCE BANNER!! THAT MEANS YOU... AND THE HULK--
OH NO!! IT'S--IT'S TOO UNBELIEVABLE!

UNDER CLOSE GUARD, THE GARGOYLE RUSHES HIS PRISONERS TO HIS SECRET STRONGHOLD, AND THEN...
YOUR SECRET IS A SECRET NO LONGER, BANNER!
I KNOW THAT YOU AND THE HULK ARE THE SAME!!
DOC! WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
EASY, RICK! IT'S HIS PLAY SO FAR!
BUT WHY? WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO BE A MONSTER? YOU MUST BE INSANE! IT--IT'S THE MOST HORRIBLE THING IN THE WORLD TO BE A FREAK--A GARGOYLE! LIKE ME!
DOC! HE'S CRYING!
I'D GIVE ANYTHING TO BE NORMAL! ANYTHING!
SO WOULD I--BUT I AM AS HELPLESS AS YOU!
WAIT! LISTEN TO ME! I CANNOT STOP MYSELF FROM TURNING INTO THE HULK--BUT YOUR CASE IS DIFFERENT!
I'VE SEEN CASES LIKE YOURS! I KNOW HOW TO CURE YOU...BY RADIATION! BUT ALTHOUGH YOUR FEATURES WOULD BECOME NORMAL, YOUR BRAIN WOULD SUFFER! YOU WOULD NO LONGER BE A BRILLIANT SCIENTIST!
DOC! YOU AIN'T GONNA HELP THAT CREEP, ARE YOU??!
QUIET, RICK!
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS TO ME... EVEN IF I DIE... SO LONG AS I COULD DIE AS--A MAN!
THEN, AT A COMMAND FROM THE GARGOYLE, ALL IS MADE READY...
NOW!
AND, WHERE A GARGOYLE HAD BEEN LYING...
DOC! IT'S WORKING!
...A MAN ARISES!
YOU DID IT!
YOU DID IT!
IGNORING THE TWO OTHERS IN THE SILENT LAB, THE LONE FIGURE WALKS TO A PORTRAIT ON THE WALL, AND THEN, IN QUIVERING TONES, HE SPEAKS...
IT WAS BECAUSE OF YOU THAT I BECAME WHAT I WAS! BECAUSE I WORKED ON YOUR SECRET BOMB TESTS!
BUT IT TOOK AN AMERICAN TO CURE ME! AND NOW--NOW THAT I AM NO LONGER A GARGOYLE, I CAN DEFY YOU, AND ALL YOU STAND FOR, LIKE A MAN!

BUT NOW, I AM A MAN AGAIN! NO LONGER BRILLIANT! NO LONGER A SCIENTIFIC GENIUS! MY WORK IS DONE, AND SO I SHALL DIE! BUT I SHALL DIE AS A MAN!
DON'T TRIGGER THAT SWITCH!

WHILE, IN THE ROCKET SHIP ABOVE...
THE GARGOYLE SET ITS CONTROLS FOR AMERICA, RICK--AND SET THE AUTOMATIC ESCAPE EJECTOR FOR US!
SO WE'RE SAVED! BY AMERICA'S ARCH ENEMY! GOSH!

YES, BRUCE BANNER AND RICK ARE SAFE, FOR NOW! BUT, IN A FEW HOURS IT WILL BE NIGHTFALL AGAIN, AND THE HULK WILL AGAIN APPEAR! SO DON'T MISS THE NEXT GREAT, SURPRISE-FILLED ISSUE!

NOTE...

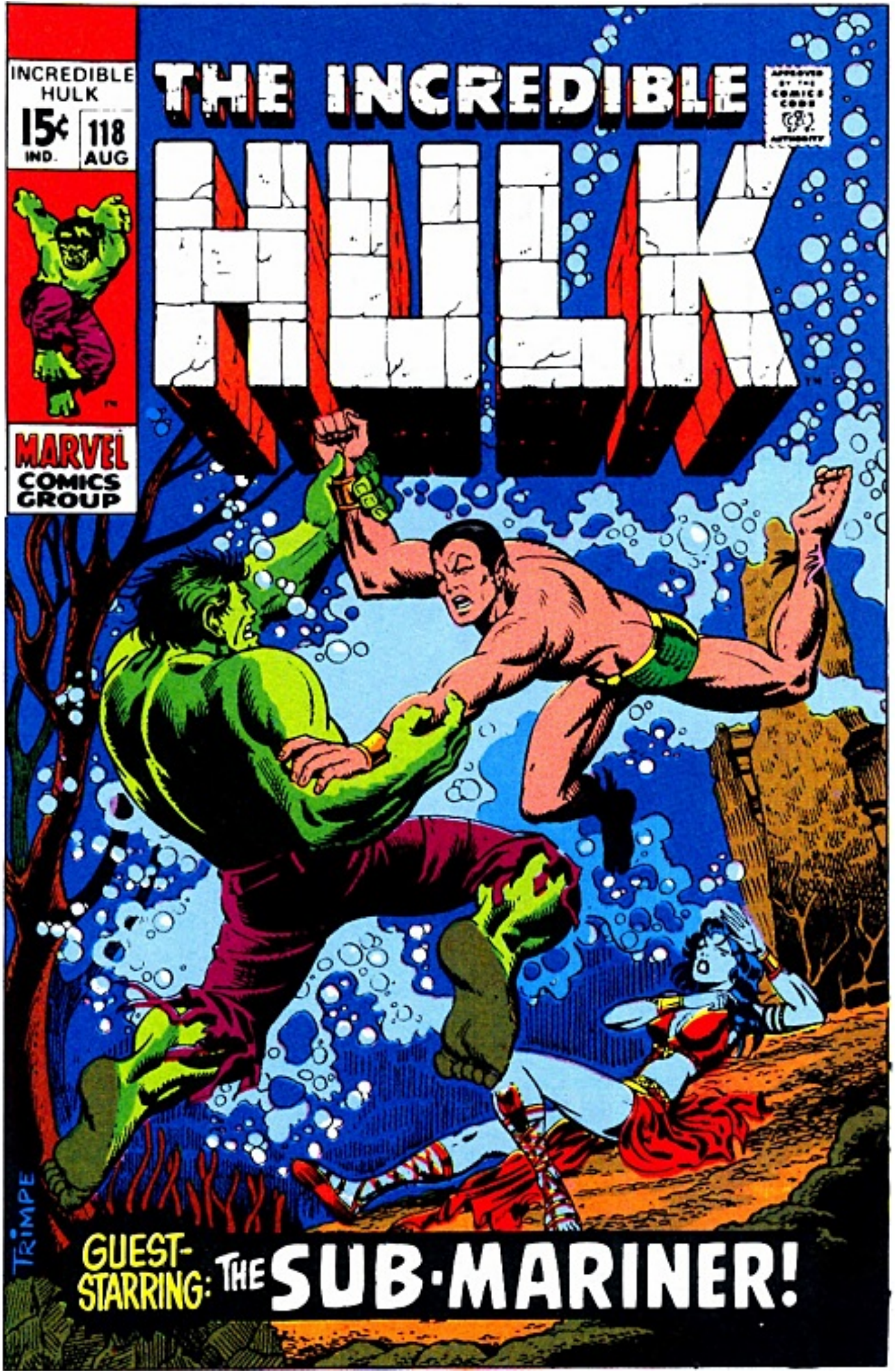
STARTING NEXT ISSUE, WE WILL FEATURE A "LETTERS TO THE EDITOR" PAGE! MAIL YOUR KNOCKS OR BOOSTS TO "EDITORS," THE HULK, THIRD FLOOR, 575 MADISON AVE., NEW YORK, N.Y.

And now, as promised, we'll offer you a more contemporary Hulk odyssey, to enable you to see the changes that time and an increased budget can bring to so compelling a work of art.

The first change you'll notice will be the fact that our jolly green giant is now being illustrated by a different artist. Yea verily, by the time issue #118 went on sale in 1969, Happy Herbie Trimpe (rhymes with shrimpy) had joined our stalwart staff and this peerless powerhouse of penciling proficiency had opted for the green-skinned Goliath some time before when the strip was up for grabs.

In the story which follows, we present one of Marvel's most memorable guest appearances in which you'll meet the water-logged Sub-Mariner, better known as Prince Namor, Son of Neptune, Lord of Atlantis.

So join us as we pick up the threads of still another endlessly continued Marvel saga—and let us see what the intervening seven years have wrought . . .

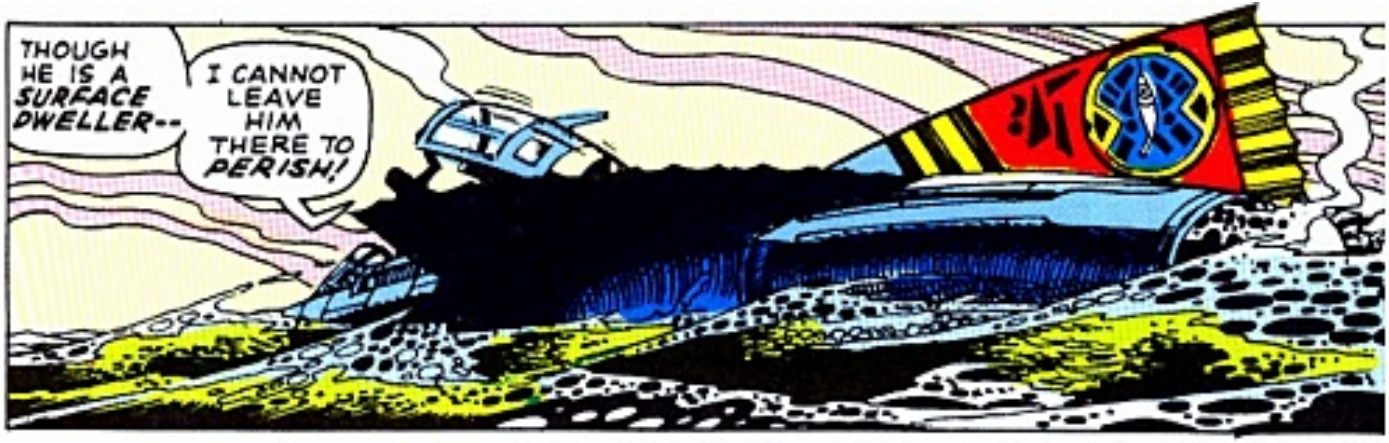

INCREDIBLE HULK
15¢ IND.
118 AUG
THE INCREDIBLE HULK
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
TRIMPE
GUEST-STARRING: THE SUB-MARINER!

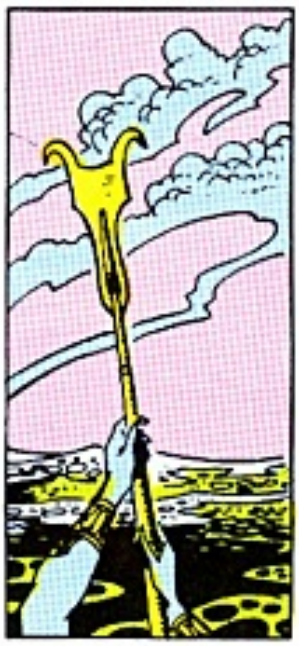
THE INCREDIBLE HULK!™

"A CLASH OF TITANS"

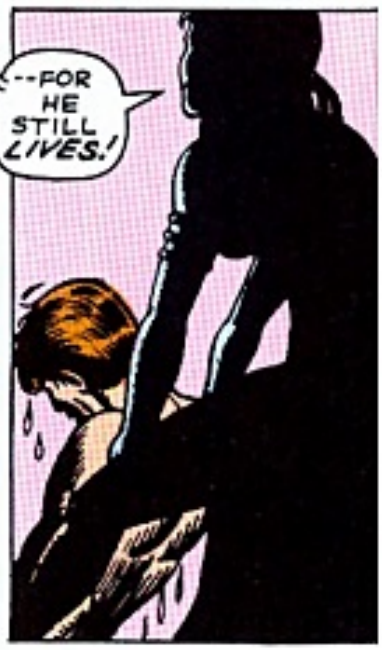
BROUGHT TO YOU BY:
STAN (THE MAN) LEE and HAPPY HERBIE TRIMPE
LETTERING: ARTIE SIMEK

LAST ISH WE SAW THE INCREDIBLE *HULK* SAVE MANKIND FROM THE *LEADER'S* DEADLY ROCKET ATTACK! BUT, IN SO DOING, HE WAS *TRANSFORMED* ONCE MORE INTO THE VULNERABLE *BRUCE BANNER*, AND FLUNG INTO THE *SEA*, WHERE WE--AND A STRANGE, *AMPHIBIAN CRUISER*--NOW *FIND* HIM--

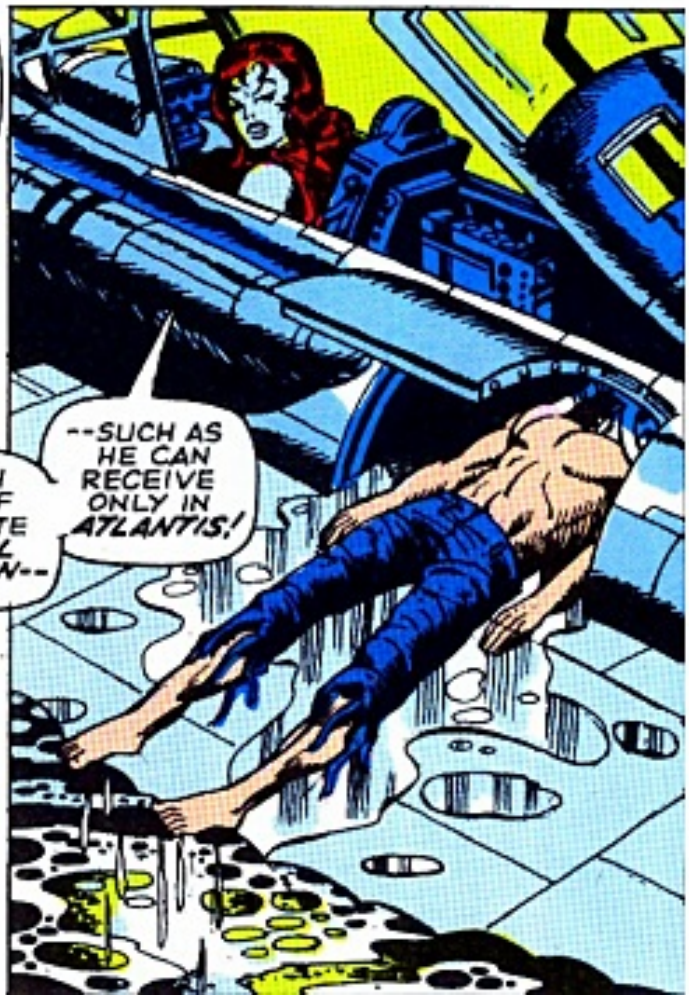

THOUGH HE IS A SURFACE DWELLER--
I CANNOT LEAVE HIM THERE TO PERISH!

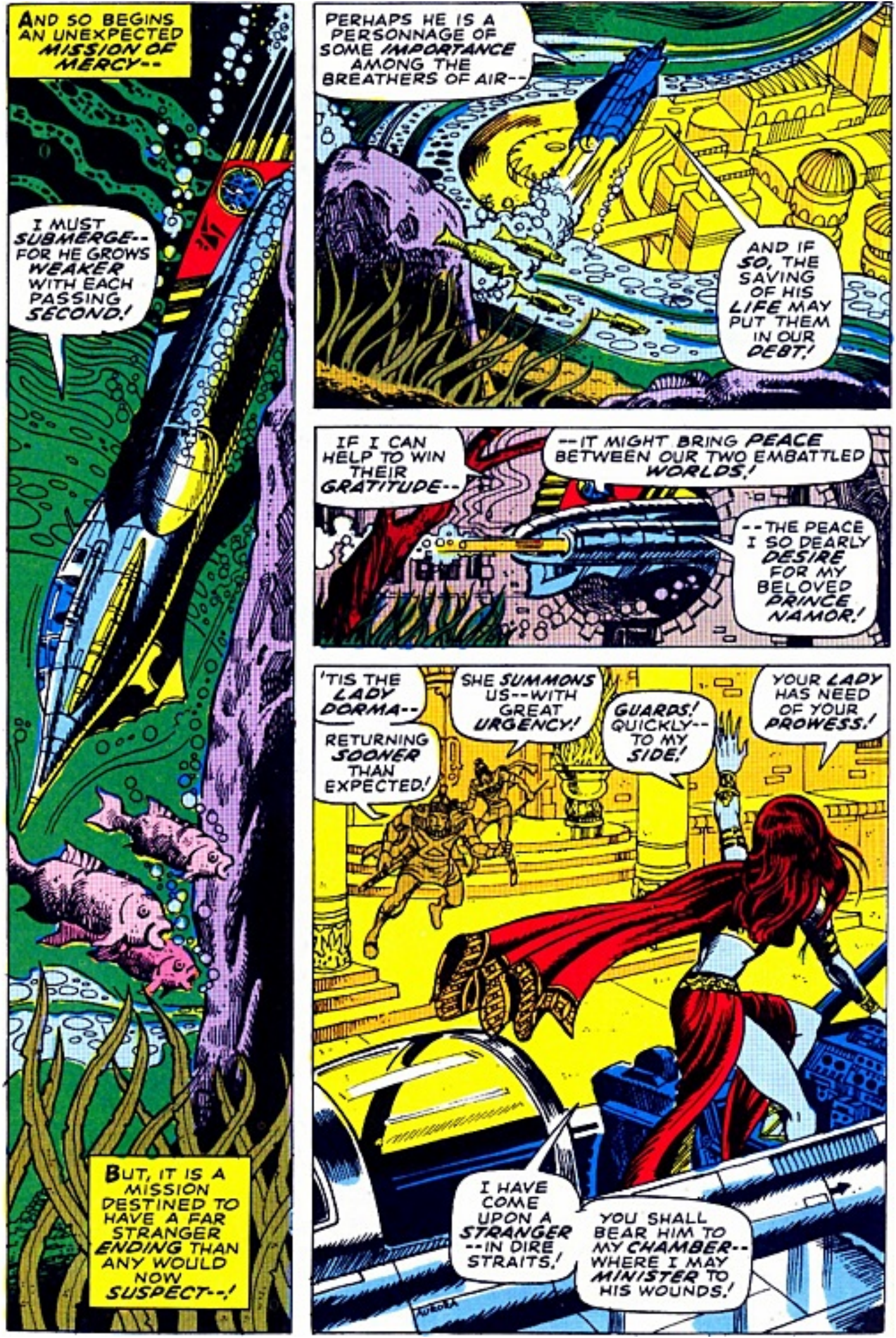


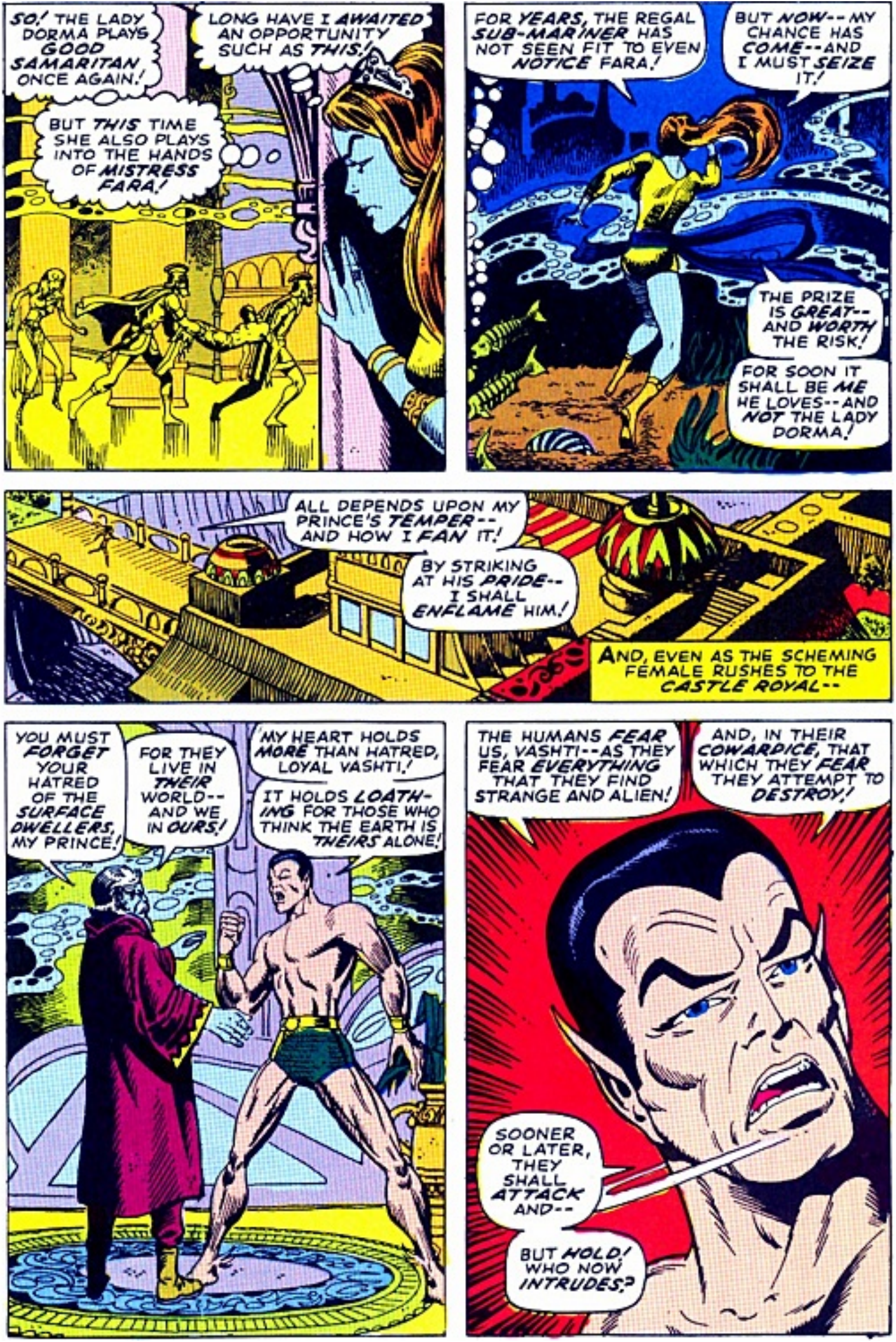
I HAVE COME IN TIME--

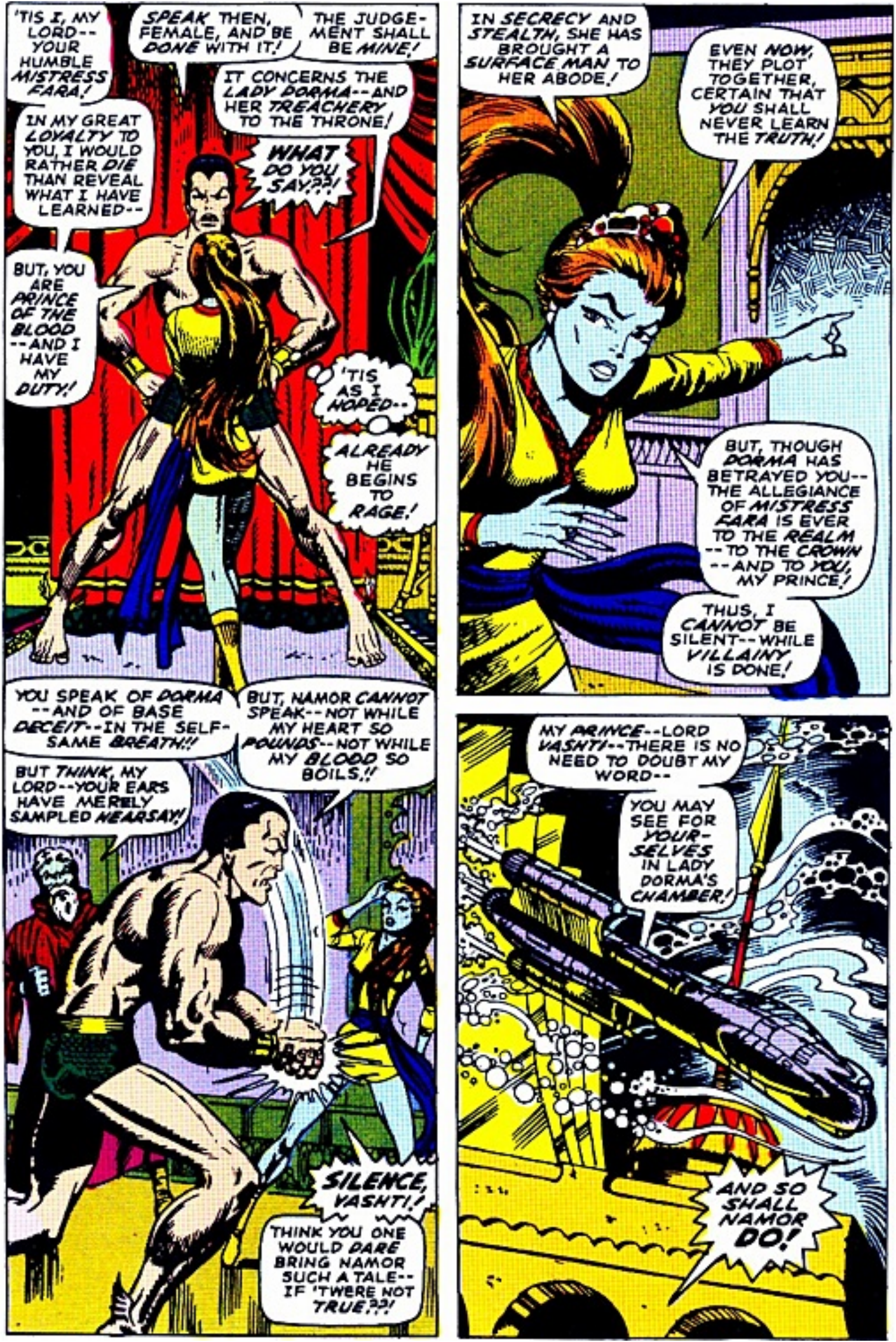

--FOR HE STILL LIVES!

THIS TABLET WILL ALLOW HIM TO BREATHE BENEATH THE SURFACE FOR 24 HOURS!
HE IS IN NEED OF IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION--


--SUCH AS HE CAN RECEIVE ONLY IN ATLANTIS!

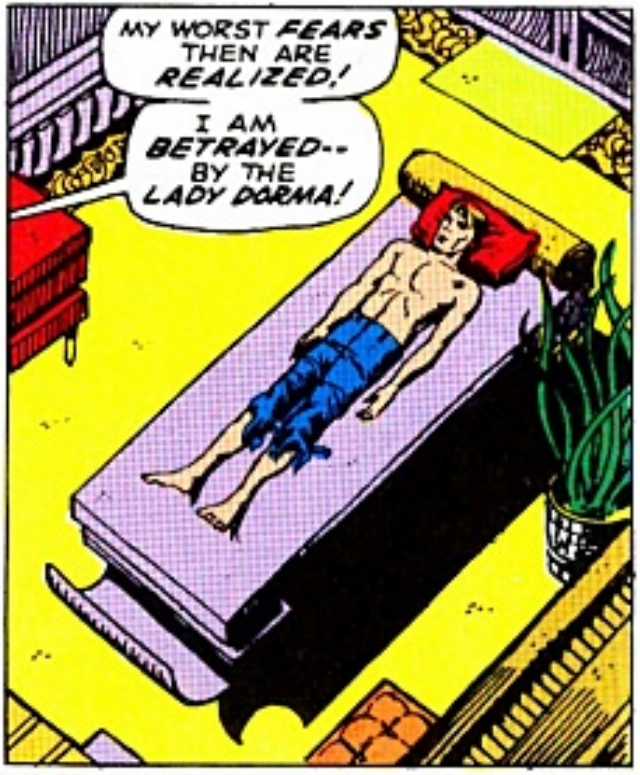

AND SO BEGINS AN UNEXPECTED MISSION OF MERCY--
I MUST SUBMERGE-- FOR HE GROWS WEAKER WITH EACH PASSING SECOND!
BUT, IT IS A MISSION DESTINED TO HAVE A FAR STRANGER ENDING THAN ANY WOULD NOW SUSPECT--!
PERHAPS HE IS A PERSONNAGE OF SOME IMPORTANCE AMONG THE BREATHERS OF AIR--
AND IF SO, THE SAVING OF HIS LIFE MAY PUT THEM IN OUR DEBT!
IF I CAN HELP TO WIN THEIR GRATITUDE--
--IT MIGHT BRING PEACE BETWEEN OUR TWO EMBATTLED WORLDS!
--THE PEACE I SO DEARLY DESIRE FOR MY BELOVED PRINCE NAMOR!
'TIS THE LADY DORMA--
RETURNING SOONER THAN EXPECTED!
SHE SUMMONS US--WITH GREAT URGENCY!
GUARDS! QUICKLY-- TO MY SIDE!
YOUR LADY HAS NEED OF YOUR PROWESS!
I HAVE COME UPON A STRANGER --IN DIRE STRAITS!
YOU SHALL BEAR HIM TO MY CHAMBER-- WHERE I MAY MINISTER TO HIS WOUNDS!


SO,! THE LADY DORMA PLAYS GOOD SAMARITAN ONCE AGAIN!
LONG HAVE I AWAITED AN OPPORTUNITY SUCH AS THIS!
BUT THIS TIME SHE ALSO PLAYS INTO THE HANDS OF MISTRESS FARA!
FOR YEARS, THE REGAL SUB-MARINER HAS NOT SEEN FIT TO EVEN NOTICE FARA!
BUT NOW--MY CHANCE HAS COME--AND I MUST SEIZE IT!
THE PRIZE IS GREAT--AND WORTH THE RISK!
FOR SOON IT SHALL BE ME HE LOVES--AND NOT THE LADY DORMA!
ALL DEPENDS UPON MY PRINCE'S TEMPER--AND HOW I FAN IT!
BY STRIKING AT HIS PRIDE--I SHALL ENFLAME HIM!
AND, EVEN AS THE SCHEMING FEMALE RUSHES TO THE CASTLE ROYAL--
YOU MUST FORGET YOUR HATRED OF THE SURFACE DWELLERS, MY PRINCE!
FOR THEY LIVE IN THEIR WORLD--AND WE IN OURS!
MY HEART HOLDS MORE THAN HATRED, LOYAL VASHTI!
IT HOLDS LOATHING FOR THOSE WHO THINK THE EARTH IS THEIRS ALONE!
THE HUMANS FEAR US, VASHTI--AS THEY FEAR EVERYTHING THAT THEY FIND STRANGE AND ALIEN!
AND, IN THEIR COWARDICE, THAT WHICH THEY FEAR THEY ATTEMPT TO DESTROY!
SOONER OR LATER, THEY SHALL ATTACK AND--
BUT HOLD! WHO NOW INTRUDES?


'TIS I, MY LORD--YOUR HUMBLE MISTRESS FARA!
SPEAK THEN, FEMALE, AND BE DONE WITH IT!
THE JUDGEMENT SHALL BE MINE!
IT CONCERNS THE LADY DORMA--AND HER TREACHERY TO THE THRONE!
WHAT DO YOU SAY?!?!
IN MY GREAT LOYALTY TO YOU, I WOULD RATHER DIE THAN REVEAL WHAT I HAVE LEARNED--
BUT, YOU ARE PRINCE OF THE BLOOD--AND I HAVE MY DUTY!
'TIS AS I HOPED--
ALREADY HE BEGINS TO RAGE!
IN SECRECY AND STEALTH, SHE HAS BROUGHT A SURFACE MAN TO HER ABODE!
EVEN NOW, THEY PLOT TOGETHER, CERTAIN THAT YOU SHALL NEVER LEARN THE TRUTH!
BUT, THOUGH DORMA HAS BETRAYED YOU--THE ALLEGIANCE OF MISTRESS FARA IS EVER TO THE REALM--TO THE CROWN--AND TO YOU, MY PRINCE!
THUS, I CANNOT BE SILENT--WHILE VILLAINY IS DONE!
YOU SPEAK OF DORMA--AND OF BASE DECEIT--IN THE SELF-SAME BREATH!!
BUT, NAMOR CANNOT SPEAK--NOT WHILE MY HEART SO POUNDS--NOT WHILE MY BLOOD SO BOILS!!
BUT THINK, MY LORD--YOUR EARS HAVE MERELY SAMPLED HEARSAY!
SILENCE, VASHTI!
THINK YOU ONE WOULD DARE BRING NAMOR SUCH A TALE--IF 'TWERE NOT TRUE?!?!
MY PRINCE--LORD VASHTI--THERE IS NO NEED TO DOUBT MY WORD--
YOU MAY SEE FOR YOURSELVES IN LADY DORMA'S CHAMBER!
AND SO SHALL NAMOR DO!

'TIS DONE.' FROM THIS TIME FORTH, IT IS FARA WHO SHALL HOLD THE PRINCE'S TRUST.'
LET ALL REMAIN.' NAMOR GOES ALONE!
MY LORD-- TAKE NEED!
'TIS USE-LESS! IN HIS RAGE, HE WILL NOT LISTEN.'
SHOOOSH!
SPKOW!
DORMA!! STAND YOU FORTH!

MY PRINCE-- WHAT IS NOW AMISS?
NEVER HAVE I SEEN SUCH UNBRIDLED WRATH UPON YOUR FACE!
THE SURFACEMAN!! WHERE IS HE?
THEN-- YOU KNOW!

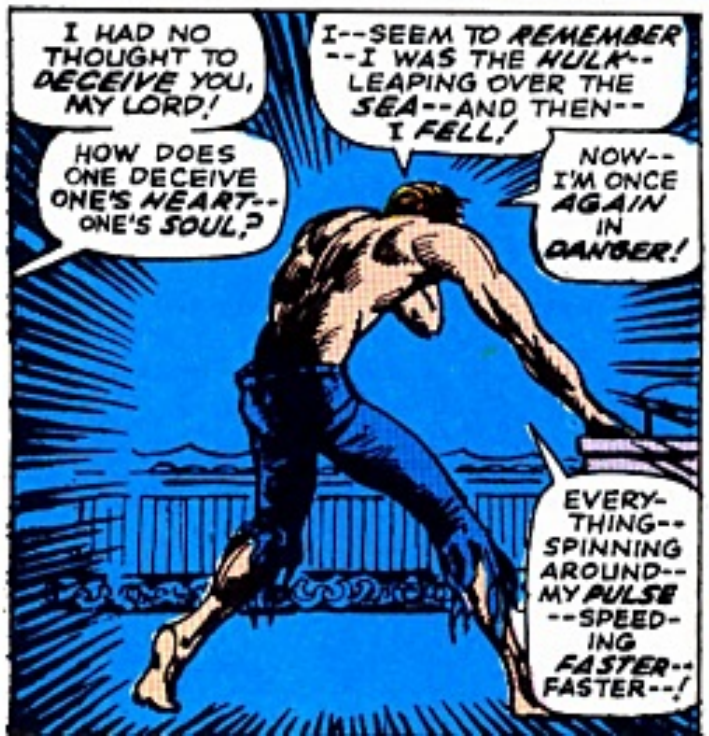

MY WORST FEARS THEN ARE REALIZED!
I AM BETRAYED-- BY THE LADY DORMA!

OH NO, MY PRINCE! IT IS NOT SO!

YOU MUST ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN!

EXPLAIN? HOW DOES ONE EXPLAIN-- DECEPTION??

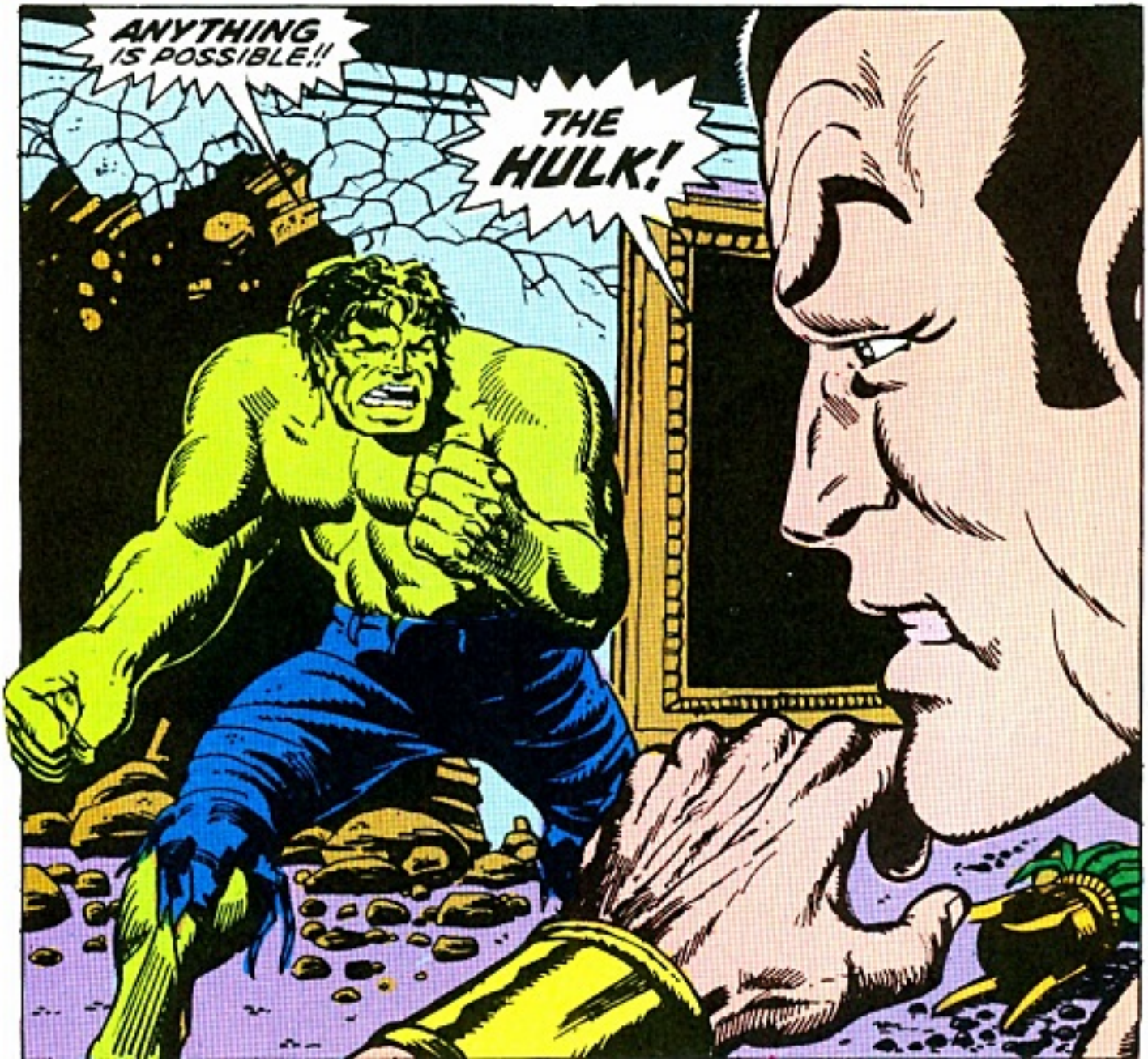
WHAT HAPPENED TO ME? WHERE AM I? WHOSE VOICES ARE THOSE?


I HAD NO THOUGHT TO DECEIVE YOU, MY LORD!
I--SEEM TO REMEMBER --I WAS THE HULK-- LEAPING OVER THE SEA--AND THEN-- I FELL!
HOW DOES ONE DECEIVE ONE'S HEART-- ONE'S SOUL?
NOW-- I'M ONCE AGAIN IN DANGER!
EVERY-- THING-- SPINNING AROUND-- MY PULSE --SPEED-- ING FASTER-- FASTER--!

WHILE, OUTSIDE THE CHAMBER DOOR--
WHERE IS HE? I MUST SEE HIM!
ONLY THEN CAN I DELIVER JUDGEMENT ROYAL!
HE IS-- TOO ILL, MY LORD!

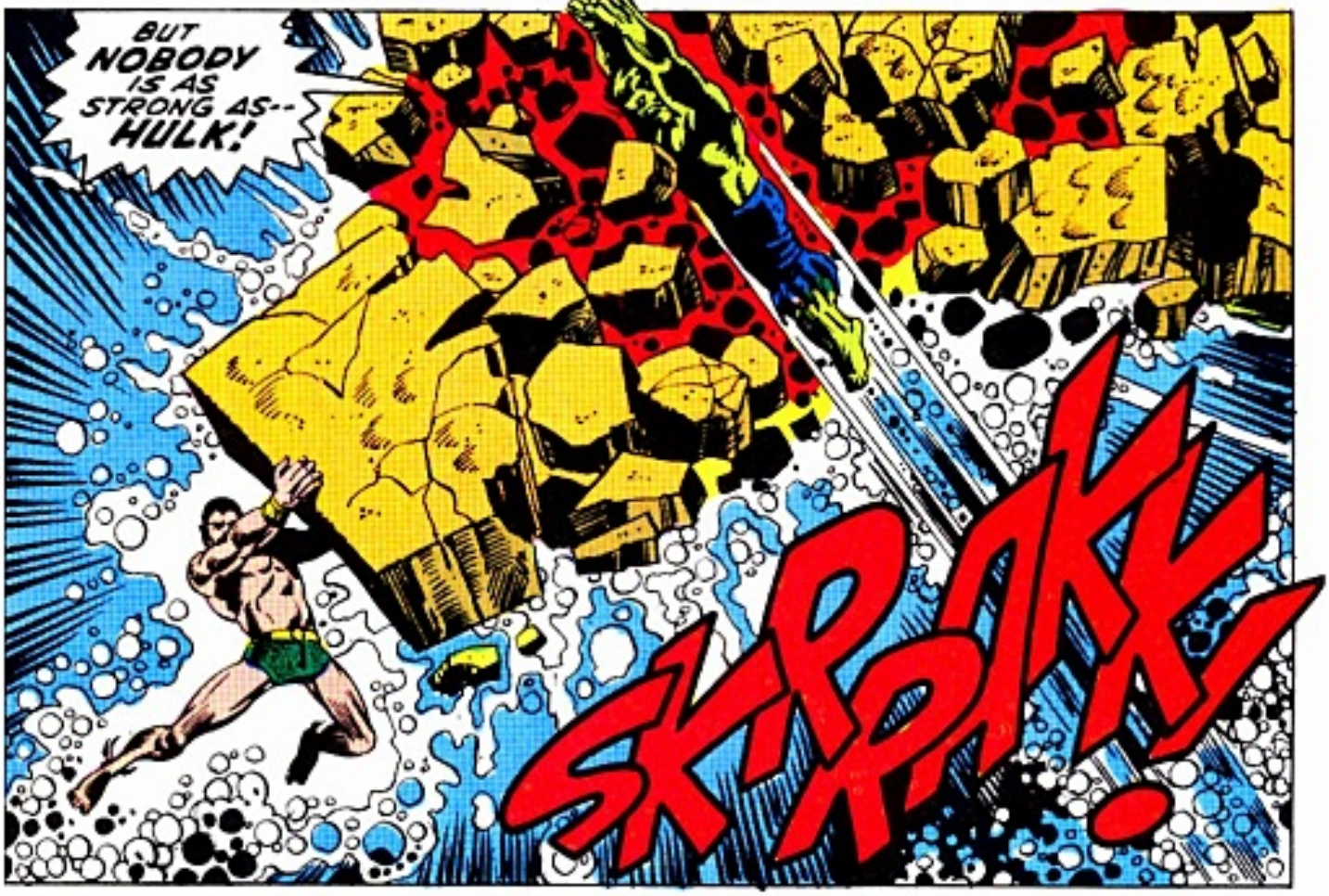
ILL.? I HEAR HIM STORMING BEHIND THE WALL--LIKE A RAGING HUMAN DYNAMO!
BUT--THAT IS NOT POSSIBLE!

KRASK!!


ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE!!
THE HULK!

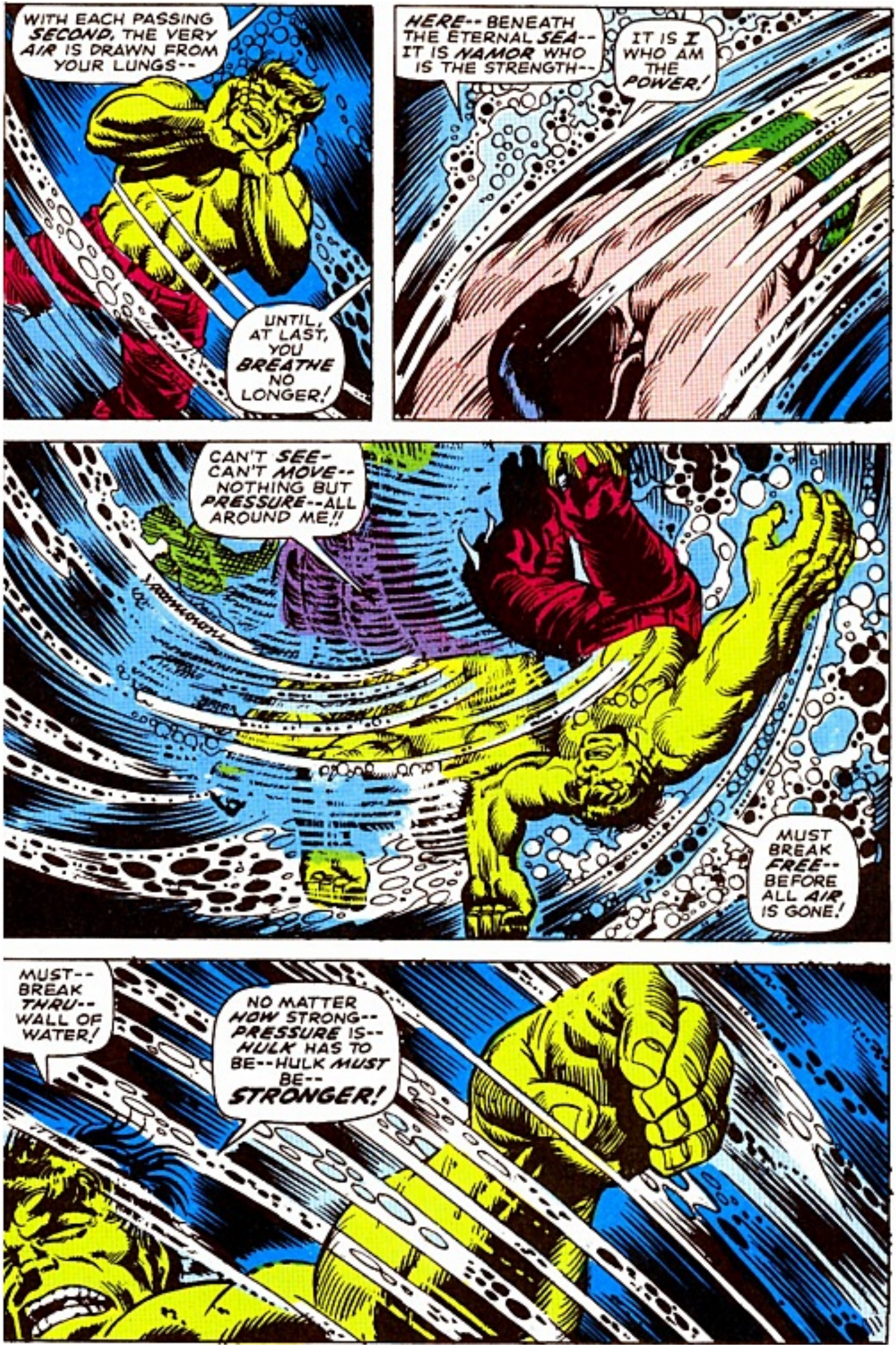
FORGIVE ME, MY LADY! 'TIS NOW MOST CRYSTAL CLEAR!
HE HELD YOU HOSTAGE! YOU WERE NOT FREE TO SPEAK!
BUT HE SHALL LEARN THE FOLLY OF THREATENING A PRINCE'S LADY!
AND NOW, GROTESQUE ONE--PREPARE TO FEEL THE MIGHT OF NAMOR!
PUNY FISH-MAN--
OH, NO!
NO!
WHAT IS YOUR MIGHT--?
--COMPARED TO MINE!!
HE HAS--CREATED A BLUDGEONING SHOCK WAVE!!
DORMA--TAKE SHELTER!
MY LORD--I CANNOT!
I AM--HELPLESSLY BUFFETED ABOUT--!
THE HOUSE ITSELF--NOW CRUMBLES--BENEATH THE IMPOSSIBLE PRESSURE!
THE HULK HAS DONE THIS!
AND SO--THE HULK MUST DIE!

WHERE IS-- THE GIRL?
I DID NOT MEAN TO HARM THE GIRL!
I ONLY FIGHT THOSE WHO ATTACK ME-- THOSE WHO ARE MY ENEMIES!
SHE IS MERELY STUNNED!
'TIS BETTER THIS WAY!
I HAVE NO WISH FOR HER TO WITNESS WHAT MUST SURELY FOLLOW!
SHE WILL REST-- WHILE NAMOR DOES WHAT MUST BE DONE!
A DEADLY MONSTER HAS BEEN LOOSED WITHIN THE REALM--
BUT, HE SHALL STRIKE NO MORE!
IMPERIUS REX!
SO--FISH-MAN TRIES TO SHOW HOW STRONG HE IS--!


BUT NOBODY IS AS STRONG AS-- HULK!
SKRAK!

'TIS NOT MY STRENGTH ALONE THAT SHALL PROVE YOUR UNDOING--
FOR NAMOR IS MASTER OF MANY SKILLS!
AND HULK IS MASTER OF GREATEST POWER!

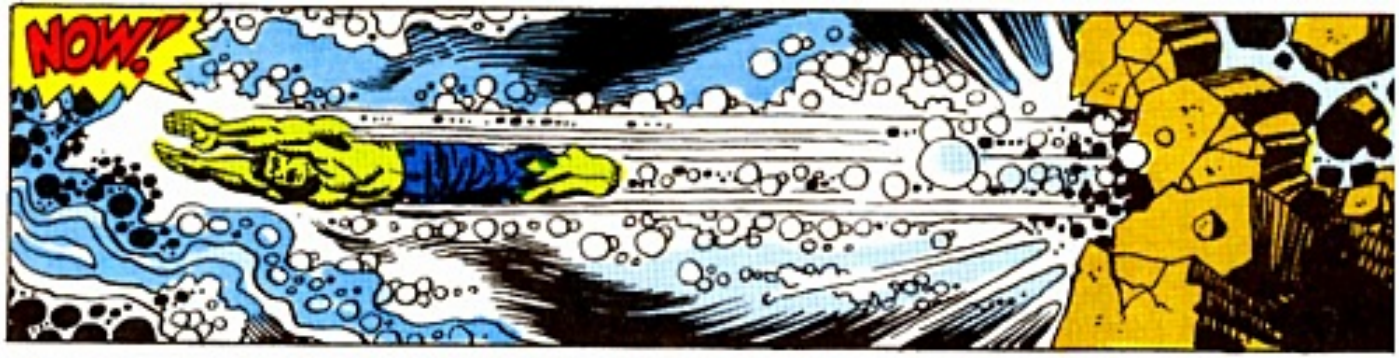
POWER?!!
HOW CAN A BESTIAL BRUTE LIKE YOU EVEN COMPREHEND THE MEANING OF THE WORD??
NOW SAMPLE THE POWER OF THE LORD OF ATLANTIS--
THE POWER TO CAUSE A SHATTERING WHIRL-POOL!!


WITH EACH PASSING SECOND, THE VERY AIR IS DRAWN FROM YOUR LUNGS--
UNTIL, AT LAST, YOU BREATHE NO LONGER!
HERE-- BENEATH THE ETERNAL SEA-- IT IS NAMOR WHO IS THE STRENGTH--
IT IS I WHO AM THE POWER!
CAN'T SEE-- CAN'T MOVE-- NOTHING BUT PRESSURE--ALL AROUND ME!!
MUST BREAK FREE-- BEFORE ALL AIR IS GONE!
MUST-- BREAK THRU-- WALL OF WATER!
NO MATTER HOW STRONG-- PRESSURE IS-- HULK HAS TO BE--HULK MUST BE-- STRONGER!

AND SO--AS THE INDESCRIBABLE PRESSURE MOUNTS--AND MOUNTS--
HE KEEPS--SPINNING AROUND--OVER AND OVER--
HE THINKS--THE HULK--CAN'T USE HIS STRENGTH AGAINST--THE PRESSURE--
BUT--I CAN--
I CAN--
THWUP!
NO ONE HAS EVER BROKEN THRU MY WHIRLPOOL TRAP BEFORE!
NO ONE ELSE--IS HULK!
NOW, WHILE THEY'RE LOCKED IN BATTLE--
I CAN MAKE CERTAIN THAT THE SUB-MARINER WILL BE MINE--FOREVER!
WHILE DORMA LIES HELPLESS--UNNOTICED--IT WILL BE SO EASY--!

--SO EASY!
BUT, AT THAT INSTANT --THE SHARP-EYED NAMOR LOOKS BELOW --AND SEES--
DORMA!!
YOU WANT HER?? HULK WILL SEND YOU THERE!
BTHM!
THE WALL! IT'S CRUMBLING!
IT'S FALLING-- THIS WAY!!
NO! NOOOO!

DORMA!
IF--ANY HARM HAS BEFALLEN HER--!
SHE MUST BE ALIVE!
SHE MUST! SHE MUST!
RROK!
DORMA!
MY LADY LIVES!
THE DEADLY IMPACT-- WAS TAKEN BY MISTRESS FARA!
YOU DID NOT WISH ME TO DO BATTLE--
PERHAPS 'TWAS YOU WHO WERE THE WISER!
A PRINCE MUST EMPLOY MERCY-- AS WELL AS MIGHT!
BUT, WHILE NAMOR SPEAKS OF MERCY--
--THE EMBITTERED, EMBATTLED HULK, DAZED, CONFUSED, NOT KNOWING WHERE TO TURN, THINKS ONLY OF--ATTACK--
HULK WILL SPRING-- FROM AGAINST WALL--
LEGS WILL PUSH ME--AS FAST AS FISH-MAN!


NOW!

DORMA--I SHALL FIND THE GREEN-SKINNED BESTIAL ONE--AND MAKE MY PEACE!
YOU SHALL NOT BE MENACED ANOTHER TIME!

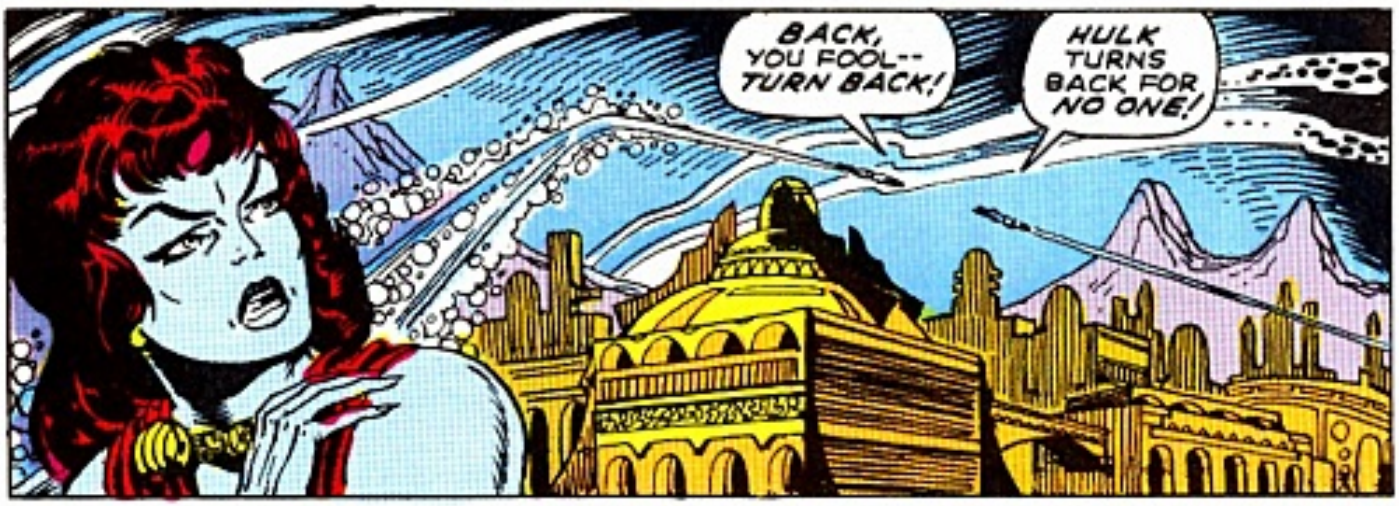
YOU HAVE LIGHTENED THE HEART OF--
MY PRINCE! BEWARE!
THAT SOUND--BEHIND ME--GROWING LOUDER!

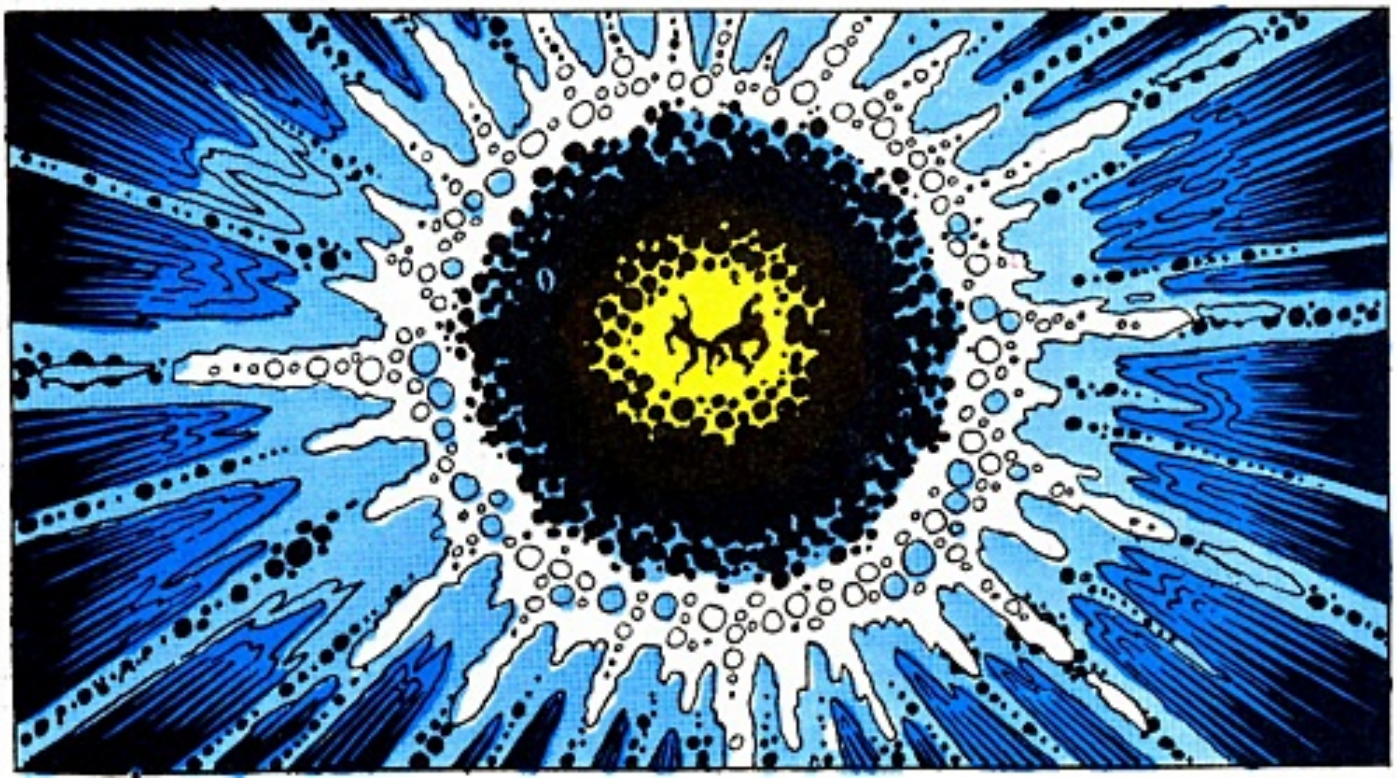
A SURGING, SHATTERING BLAST OF FORCE--COMING EVER NEARER!!

NOTHING WILL SAVE SUB-MARINER NOW!

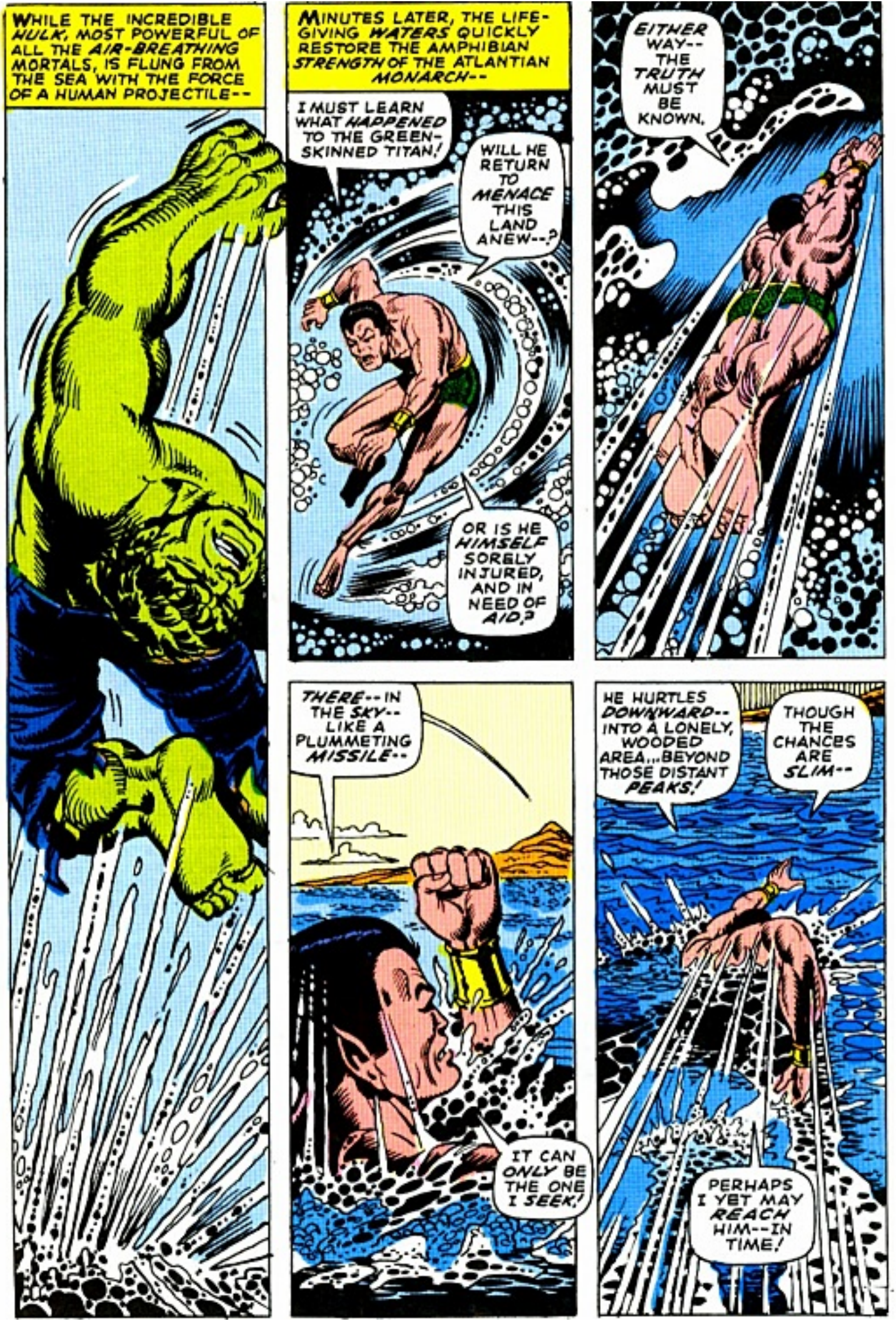
THE HULK! COMING AT ME LIKE A LIVING TORPEDO!
THEN--IT IS TOO LATE TO SPEAK OF PEACE!
MY FIRST TASK IS TO STOP HIM!

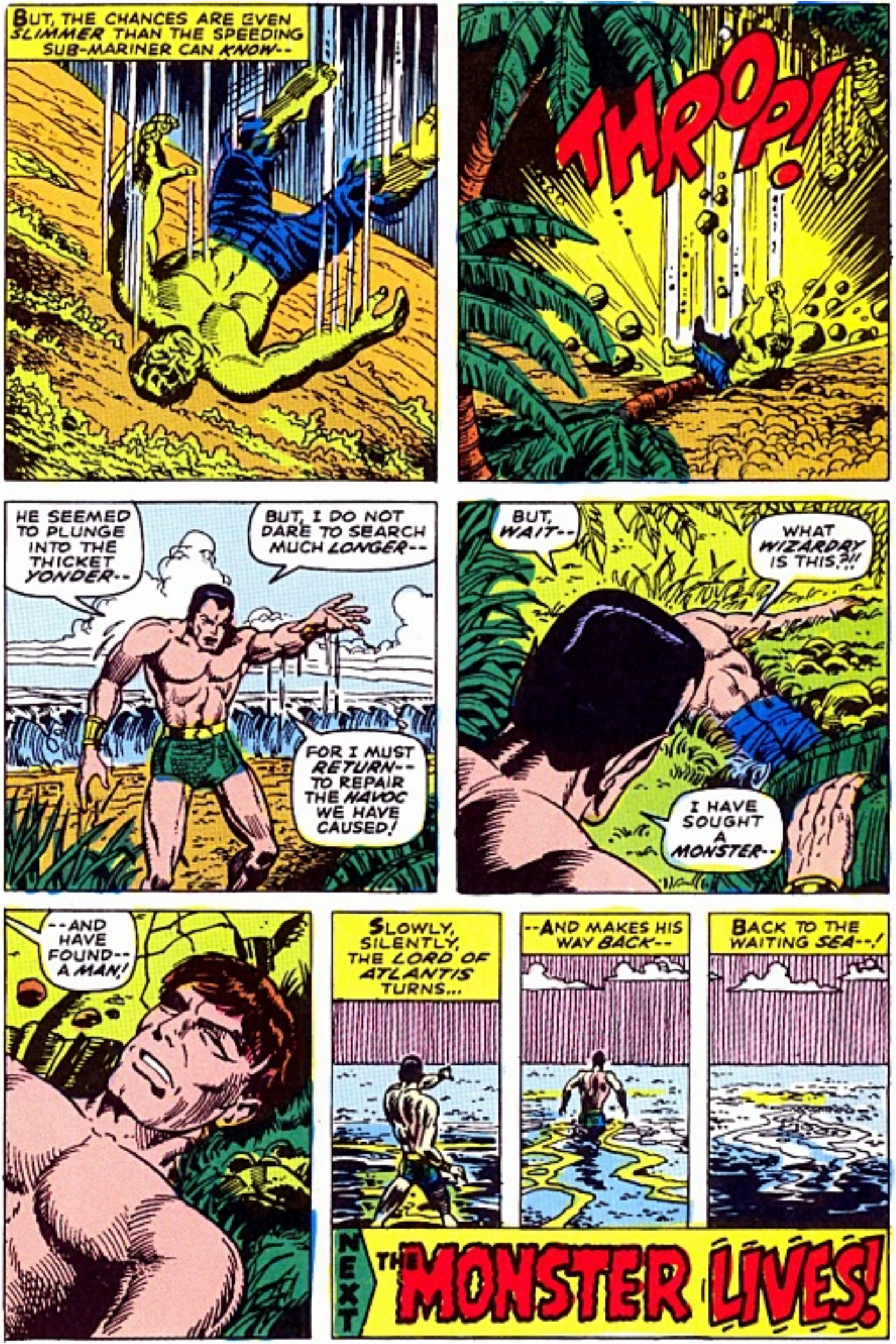
I MUST BRING HIM DOWN-- BEFORE HE CAN REACH THE CITY PROPER!
THERE MUST BE NO OTHER VICTIMS-- SAVE OURSELVES!
HE DARES TO MEET ME!! GOOD! GOOD!


BACK, YOU FOOL-- TURN BACK!
HULK TURNS BACK FOR NO ONE!



INSTANTANEOUSLY, ALL OF ATLANTIS QUIVERS AND SHAKES, AS THOUGH RACKED TO THE CORE BY A MONSTROUS EARTHQUAKE--
WHILE, FOR HUNDREDS OF MILES AROUND, THE MIGHTIEST OF VESSELS ARE BUFFETED AND BRUISED BY THE SUDDEN FURY OF THE TEMPEST-TOSSED SEA--
--AS GIGANTIC TIDAL WAVES THREATEN THE COASTLINES OF AN ENTIRE CONTINENT --UNTIL, AT LAST, THE FANTASTIC SHOCK SUBSIDES--
BUT, THE STAGGERING IMPACT UPON THE TWO LIVING BEINGS WHO HAVE CAUSED THE NEAR-CATACLYSM--STILL REMAINS TO BE SEEN--
--AS THE MIGHTIEST OF ALL UNDER-SEA ENTITIES IS HURLED FOR COUNTLESS FATHOMS ACROSS THE FABLED REALM--


WHILE THE INCREDIBLE HULK, MOST POWERFUL OF ALL THE AIR-BREATHING MORTALS, IS FLUNG FROM THE SEA WITH THE FORCE OF A HUMAN PROJECTILE--
MINUTES LATER, THE LIFE-GIVING WATERS QUICKLY RESTORE THE AMPHIBIAN STRENGTH OF THE ATLANTIAN MONARCH--
I MUST LEARN WHAT HAPPENED TO THE GREEN-SKINNED TITAN!
WILL HE RETURN TO MENACE THIS LAND ANEW--?
OR IS HE HIMSELF SORELY INJURED, AND IN NEED OF AID?
EITHER WAY-- THE TRUTH MUST BE KNOWN.
THERE--IN THE SKY-- LIKE A PLUMMETING MISSILE--
IT CAN ONLY BE THE ONE I SEEK!
HE HURTLES DOWNWARD-- INTO A LONELY, WOODED AREA...BEYOND THOSE DISTANT PEAKS!
THOUGH THE CHANCES ARE SLIM--
PERHAPS I YET MAY REACH HIM--IN TIME!


BUT, THE CHANCES ARE EVEN SLIMMER THAN THE SPEEDING SUB-MARINER CAN KNOW--
THROP!
HE SEEMED TO PLUNGE INTO THE THICKET YONDER--
BUT, I DO NOT DARE TO SEARCH MUCH LONGER--
FOR I MUST RETURN-- TO REPAIR THE HAVOC WE HAVE CAUSED!
BUT, WAIT--
WHAT WIZARDRY IS THIS?!!
I HAVE SOUGHT A MONSTER--
--AND HAVE FOUND-- A MAN!
SLOWLY, SILENTLY, THE LORD OF ATLANTIS TURNS...
--AND MAKES HIS WAY BACK--
BACK TO THE WAITING SEA--!
NEXT
THE MONSTER LIVES!

PART THREE

THE WORLD'S BEST-SELLING SWINGER

MY daughter is into numerology. She'd probably be the first to predict what happened next. After all, the first two Marvel "new-wave" productions were admitted blockbusters; that means the next one we came up with, being number three, would have to be far bigger than both of them—or else a total dud. Well, having read the first two spellbinding parts of this literary landmark, you know how I hate to boast. Suffice it to say that *número tres,* The Amazing Spider-Man, wasn't a dud.

In order to tell you how Spidey was born, we've got to go back to the book that preceded him, because it's basically a story within a story.

Up till now I've frequently mentioned Jolly Jack Kirby as our most ubiquitous artist-in-residence. He wasn't christened Jolly Jack —sometimes he wasn't even all that jolly—but I got a kick out of giving alliterative nicknames to our genial little galaxy of superstars, mostly for the purpose of enabling the readers to remember who they were. You see, prior to the emergence of Marvel Comics, the artists and writers who produced the strips, as well as the editors, art directors, and letterers, were mostly unknown to the reader, who rarely if ever saw their names in print. In order to change that image and attempt to give a bit more glamour to our hitherto unpublicized creative caliphs, I resorted to every device I could think of—and the nutty nicknames seemed to work.

However, Jolly Jack wasn't the only shining star in the ever-growing Marvel galaxy. The time is come for me to speak of Sturdy Stevey Ditko. And now that I've spoken of him, it's necessary to digress again for just another few minutes.

During the time that The Fantastic Four and The Incredible Hulk were taking the world of letters by storm and becoming household words—in my household, anyway—we were still experimenting with

different types of comic-books. And one of them in particular must be clearly understood before you can even hope to pass your year-end exam in Marvel lore. That one is *Amazing Adult Fantasy*.

It wasn't always *Amazing Adult Fantasy*. It started out as *Amazing Fantasy*, with all sorts of monster tales and assorted fantasy yarns with O. Henry-type endings. One day, in an effort to learn whether it was possible to increase the size of our older readership, I decided to add the word "Adult" to our masthead and to upgrade the stories as much as possible. With this in mind, we return once again to where we had left Mr. Ditko.

Steve Ditko, like Kirby, was a natural when it came to comics. His ability at telling a story in pictures was second to none, and his sense of layout and design, coupled with a highly individualistic style of drawing, seemed to be immensely popular with our readers—as it certainly was with me. Steve had done countless surprise-ending mystery strips for us in the past, and I felt his style was both unique and sophisticated enough to warrant trying an offbeat experiment.

In theory it seemed perfect. The older readers generally enjoyed stories with unexpected shock endings, and Steve and I had collaborated on so many together that it seemed only natural to present an entire magazine with such features. *Amazing Fantasy* would become *Amazing Adult Fantasy*, with five far-out tales per issue, written by yours truly and illustrated by Steve Ditko.

We produced fifteen issues of *AAF* and I loved every one. The artwork was sensational and I must admit I thought the plots held up pretty well also. As a matter of fact, the plots must have been fairly effective because they've since been "adopted" by innumerable TV suspense shows over the years. However, you're probably wondering what all of these Rabelaisian reminiscences have to do with Spider-Man. I was hoping you'd ask.

Amazing Adult Fantasy finally ran its course. After issue #10 the sales began to soften and it seemed that we were running out of steam. Apparently we'd been doing too good a job with our superheroes. The sales of the superhero magazines were soaring, which meant that *AAF*, with its five little featurettes per issue, was having an uphill battle bucking a trend. So it was decided that the fifteenth issue of *Amazing Adult Fantasy* would be the final one. To mark the occasion, we even dropped the word "Adult" from the title. And now —here comes Spider-Man.

Just for kicks, I wanted to try something different. Oh sure, The Fantastic Four was different—and The Hulk was different. But I mean really different. For quite a while I'd been toying with the idea of doing a strip that would violate all the conventions—break all the rules. A strip that would actually feature a teenager as the star, instead of making him an (ugh!) adult hero's sidekick. A strip in which the main character would lose out as often as he'd win—in fact, more often. A strip in which nothing would progress according to formula—the situations, the cast of characters, and their relationship to each other would all be unusual and unexpected. Yep, I knew what I wanted all right, but where would I ever get a chance to try it? Where—except in a magazine that we were planning to kill anyway?

You guessed it. I figured there was nothing to lose. *Amazing Fantasy* #15 would be the last issue before its preordained demise. It wouldn't matter what we did to it, what strips were included in it; it was doomed. That meant I'd have a chance to get this latest little gnawing idea out of my system, once and for all. The die was cast. I would try a brand-new, totally different type of strip in *AF* #15. It would be a swan song never to be forgotten.

What about the name? Why Spider-Man? Simple. In the long-dead, practically Paleolithic era when I had been on the verge of approaching teenagerhood, one of my favorite pulp magazine heroes was a stalwart named The Spider. He wore a slouch hat and a finger ring with the image of an arachnid—a ring which, when he punched a foe fearlessly in the face, would leave its mark, an impression of a spider. It was The Spider's calling card, and it sent goose pimples up and down my ten-year-old spine. More than that, I can still remember how the magazine's subtitle grabbed me. It was called *The Spider*—but after his name were the never-to-be-forgotten words: *Master of Men.* Just play with that for a moment—roll it around on your tongue, savor the fateful, fascinating flavor—*The Spider, Master of Men.* My mind was made up, the stage was set, the cards had been dealt. I was no more than a puppet in the shadow show of destiny.

Now, as far as I can remember, The Spider had no superhuman powers. It seems to me he was just a good guy who fought the bad guys. It was his name that grabbed me. But that was enough.

I can still remember discussing my sinister little scheme with Martin Goodman. I told him I'd try to do the whole new strip in a tongue-in-cheek manner. Everybody knew about Superman—so the

time had come for a competitor to make the scene; and what fun it would be to call him Spider-Man.

Martin's reaction was natural enough. In his own gentle way he implied that I had lost my marbles. He patiently informed me that people didn't like spiders, that it was an unlikely name for a hero, and that Spider-Man would merit somewhat less than the reading public's whole-hearted, enthusiastic approval. For my part I told him his logic was incontrovertible, but hear me out. Then I told him about The Spider. Verily, I bared my soul, mentioning how my childish heart would madly pound in breathless anticipation of each new issue. I zealously explained how I hoped that Spider-Man would be a trend-setter, a funky freaky feature in tune with the times. And then, I played my ace. I reminded M.G. that we'd be presenting Spider-Man in *Amazing Fantasy*'s final issue—we were killing the magazine anyway—so what's the harm?

Possibly hypnotized by my unassailable logic and no doubt mesmerized by my youthful charm, plus the fact that he was growing increasingly aware that he was late for a golf date, he made the decision. Spider-Man would live. Had I known then what all of comicdom assembled knows now, I'd have recorded that magic moment for posterity.

And now comes the hard part—for you. This is where you've got to pay strict attention because the scenario gets a bit complicated and I hate to make long explanations. This is the part that deals with Kirby and Ditko, and why the strip turned out the way it did.

Whenever we began a new feature, one of my most critical tasks was determining who would do the artwork. Every comic-strip artist has his own style, just as every actor or every musician does. Matching the right artist to the right strip is the goal of every editor. Matching the best writer to the proper artist is equally important, but since I was both editor and writer at the time, I need not concern you with that little matter. You've got enough to worry about.

As you've certainly gathered by now, Kirby and Ditko were our two artistic big guns at that time. But Jolly Jack had more experience with superheroes. Steve Ditko's forte—or so I thought—was in drawing the various assorted mystery/monster/fantasy stories. Hence, I gave the first Spider-Man assignment to Jack Kirby.

"Jolly Jack," said I (I didn't really refer to him as Jolly, but I felt it would give a light, friendly tone to this entire exposition), "I'd like

you to illustrate a brand-new feature named Spider-Man." Jack, with his usual surge of cosmic creativity figuratively oozing from every pore, said it would be a breeze.

At this point, O true believer, it is vitally important that you understand the art style of the meritorious Mr. Kirby. Jack has a flair for the dramatic that truly surpasseth all understanding. Everything he renders is bigger, and usually better, than life. As for his heroes, he manages to imbue them with a nobility and an almost godlike charisma which helps to give them their great appeal. Okay, armed with that essential bit of knowledge, read on.

Regarding Spider-Man, I told Jack that I wanted to try something different. I didn't want him to be overly heroic-looking. I wanted him to be just an ordinary guy who happens to have a super power. He was to be not too handsome, not too glamorous, not too graceful, not too muscular—in other words, sort of the way I might be if I had a super power, which is not to be construed as an admission that I don't.

But alas and alack, when I saw the first few pages that Jack had drawn, I realized we had a problem. They were too good. Try as he might, he had been apparently unable to deglamorize Spidey enough. All those years of drawing superheroes must have made it a little too difficult to labor so mightily and come forth with a superloser, or if you will, a supershnook. Actually, I was almost relieved. Jack was so busy with his other popular features, and I had so many additional new ones to give him, that I realized it might be better to let someone else try Spider-Man rather than give the jolly one more than he could comfortably handle.

Ah. Now I can almost see your self-satisfied smile as you cleverly think, "Hey, I'll bet this is where Steve Ditko comes in." And how right you are.

Steve's style, especially in those halcyon days of yore, was almost diametrically different from Jack's. Where Jack would exaggerate, Steve would strive zealously for total realism. Where Jack made his featured characters as heroically handsome as possible, Steve's forte seemed to be depicting the average man in the street. I decided to play a hunch. I asked Steve to draw Spider-Man. And he did. And the rest is history.

After Spidey's premiere appearance in *Amazing Fantasy* #15 the book was dropped and we all forgot about it. I'd gotten the Spider-Man character out of my system and could now go back to our other

superstars. But then it happened. The sales reports started coming in. Months after *AF* had been kissed off and abandoned we realized we had had a best seller on our hands—and it had to be because of Spider-Man. It didn't take long to arrange another conference between Martin Goodman and myself, and when that momentous meeting had ended, we had decided to let *Amazing Fantasy* enjoy the hiatus it so richly deserved while we resurrected ol' Spidey in a book of his own. Henceforth, the reading public would be the lucky recipients of a brand-new monthly publication entitled *The Amazing Spider-Man*. So it was ordained. So it was done. And Spider-Man has consistently been our best-selling title for more than a decade.

The list of innovations which must be credited to the wondrous web-slinger could fill another book this size. But it might be in order to mention just a few for you in an effort to explain some of the possible reasons for Spidey's world-wide popularity. To begin with, he was probably the first superhero to wear his neuroses on his sleeve. The poor guy is far more troubled than most of the characters he has to battle. And how many other superheroes are there who have to worry about their dear old Aunt May dying of a heart attack? Come to think of it, have you ever heard of a superhero with continuing problems with his love life? Certainly not in those days. We structured the series in the pattern of any daytime radio soap opera, and miraculously we seem to have made it stick. Then there were the real-life touches. How about the time Spidey needed some extra money so he appeared as a guest performer on the Ed Sullivan show? He was paid by check, only to discover he couldn't cash the darn thing because he didn't have an account in the name of Spider-Man—and he couldn't reveal his true identity to a bank teller. Or the time he tore his costume and realized he'd have to learn to sew it himself because he could hardly take it to his local tailor. One sequence I really enjoyed writing, and which drew tons of fan mail, was the time our web-swinging hero visited The Fantastic Four and told them he wanted to join the group, thinking it would pay him more than he was making on his own. He grew indignant when he was told The FF was a nonprofit organization, and he split as soon as he could. See what I mean? Not quite the same situations that comics had been offering their readers in the dark and dismal days of the pre-Spider-Man era.

And leave us not forget the cast of characters. Was ever there such

a strangely assorted, improbable group as those who capricously cavort within the pages of the world's most popular comic-book? Starting with the ageless Aunt May, who may still be alive at the time you read this—Aunt May, whose tender devotion to her orphaned nephew still prompts her to worry if he goes out in the rain without his galoshes, or if he should miss a meal or forget to take his cod liver oil. And then there's J. Jonah Jameson, the irascible publisher of the *Daily Bugle*, for whom Peter Parker (Spider-Man's alter ego) works as a free-lance photographer. J.J. used to get as much fan mail as Spidey himself, what with his never-ending diatribes against the web-spinner, his violent bursts of temper against anything that seemed to threaten the status quo or his own pocketbook—J.J., whose bark was certainly on a par with his bite. But to offset J.J, there's also Robbie Robertson, the *Bugle*'s city editor and Peter's loyal friend and confidant. Robbie was one of the first black characters to play an important, continuing role in any superhero series, and he's as much a part of the strip as Spidey himself. Then there are the girls. Starting with Betty Brant, J.J.'s secretary and Peter's first love, and continuing right on through to Gwen Stacy, whom Peter wanted to marry right up till the time of her shocking, agonizing, accidental death in issue #121, a death which still brings us letters of protest in each day's mail. Shortly thereafter, Peter seemed to have a thing going with Mary Jane Watson, the hip, happy honey who's never far from the scene of the action. And after that? Well, Marvel's never been accused of being shy with surprises.

However, it's the villains who really knock me out the most. Although they began their appearances after the first issue, what red-blooded Spideyphile can truthfully say his pulse doesn't pound a little faster at the mere mention of Doctor Octopus, The Vulture, The Kingpin, The Green Goblin, and the howling host of other heavies who are such an integral and endearing part of Spidey's little repertory company? And as you know, what with Marvel's mixed-up policy of cross-pollinating our various titles, any one or any combination of vile, vituperative villains are apt to pop up without warning in any other superhero's mag to inflict his deeds of dastardly derring-do when you least expect it.

Of course, there are dozens of characters I've neglected to mention —characters such as Harry Osborn, who had been Peter Parker's best friend and was also, incidentally, the son of The Green Goblin,

Spidey's deadliest foe. And let's toast good ol' Flash Thompson, the star athlete of Peter's high school in the early days of the series. Flash's favorite hobby was bullying our hero, little dreaming that "Puny Parker" was, in reality, the amazing Spider-Man, Flash's all-time idol. Then there was the one-armed scientist named Dr. Curtis Connors, who was a devoted family man as well as a friend of Peter Parker's. It wasn't his fault that he'd sometimes turn into the loathsome Lizard, whose lust for violence and domination over mankind posed many a sticky little prɒblem for our friendly neighborhood Spider-Man. I could go on and on, but I know you're anxious to read the very first Spidey strip itself now that you've been so thoroughly briefed.

Very well then. I've guided you thus far, but now once again we come to a parting of the ways. For the next few minutes you're on your own—it'll be just you, and the Spider-Man of old. So I'll take a break while you blithely relive the dizzying thrill of a rare discovery . . .

AMAZING
FANTASY
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AUG
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MC
INTRODUCING SPIDER-MAN
THOUGH THE WORLD MAY MOCK PETER PARKER, THE TIMID TEEN AGER...
...IT WILL SOON MARVEL AT THE AWESOME MIGHT OF SPIDER-MAN!
ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:
AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO YOU, FROM THE EDITOR--ABOUT THE NEW AMAZING!

SPIDER-MAN!

LIKE COSTUME HEROES? CONFIDENTIALLY, WE IN THE COMIC MAG BUSINESS REFER TO THEM AS "LONG UNDERWEAR CHARACTERS"! AND, AS YOU KNOW, THEY'RE A DIME A DOZEN! BUT, WE THINK YOU MAY FIND OUR ***SPIDERMAN*** JUST A BIT... DIFFERENT!

SAY, GANG, WE NEED ONE MORE GUY FOR THE DANCE! HOW ABOUT ***PETER PARKER*** OVER THERE?

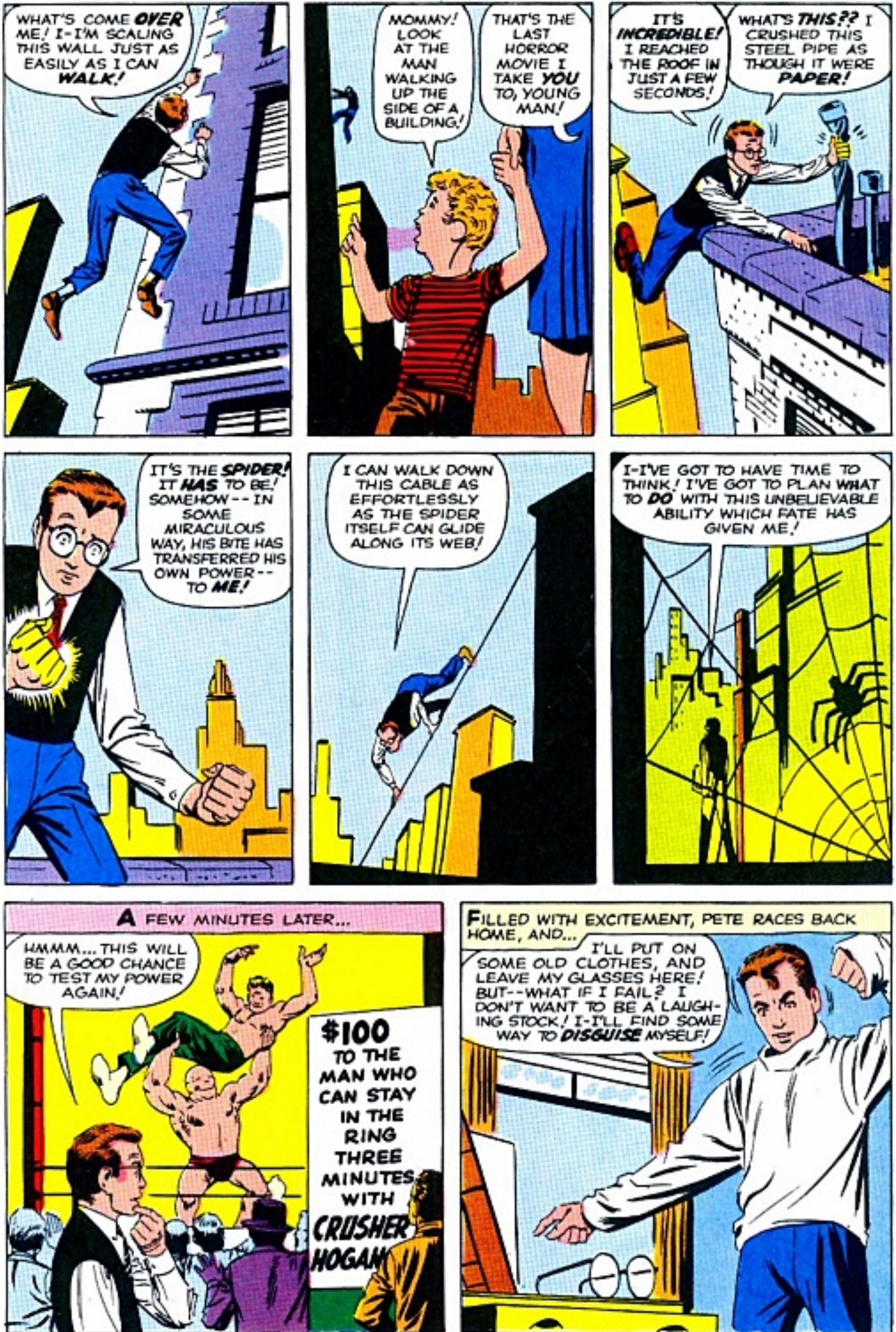
ARE YOU ***KIDDIN'?*** THAT BOOKWORM WOULDN'T KNOW A CHA-CHA FROM A WALTZ!

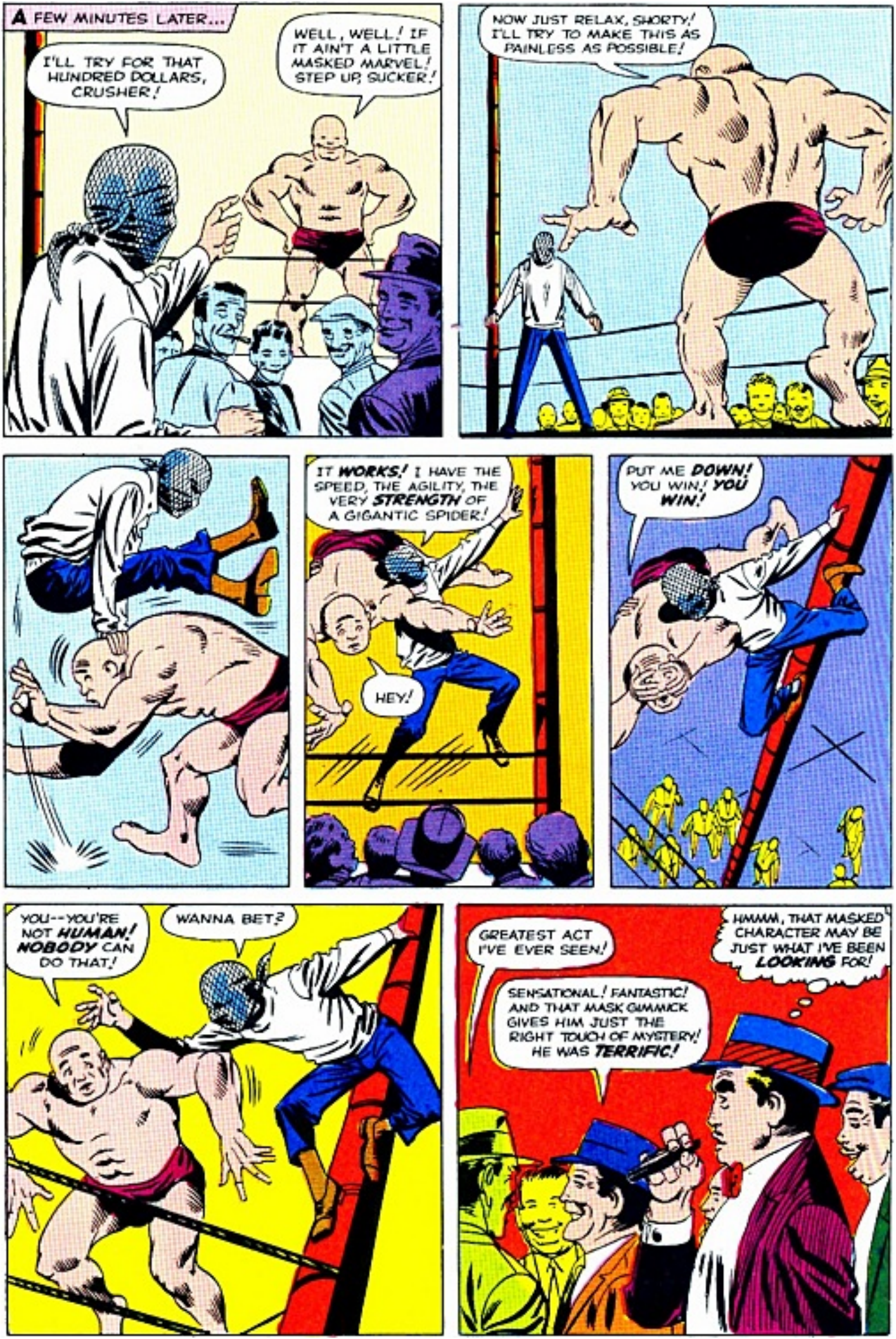
PETER PARKER? HE'S MIDTOWN HIGH'S ONLY PROFESSIONAL WALLFLOWER!

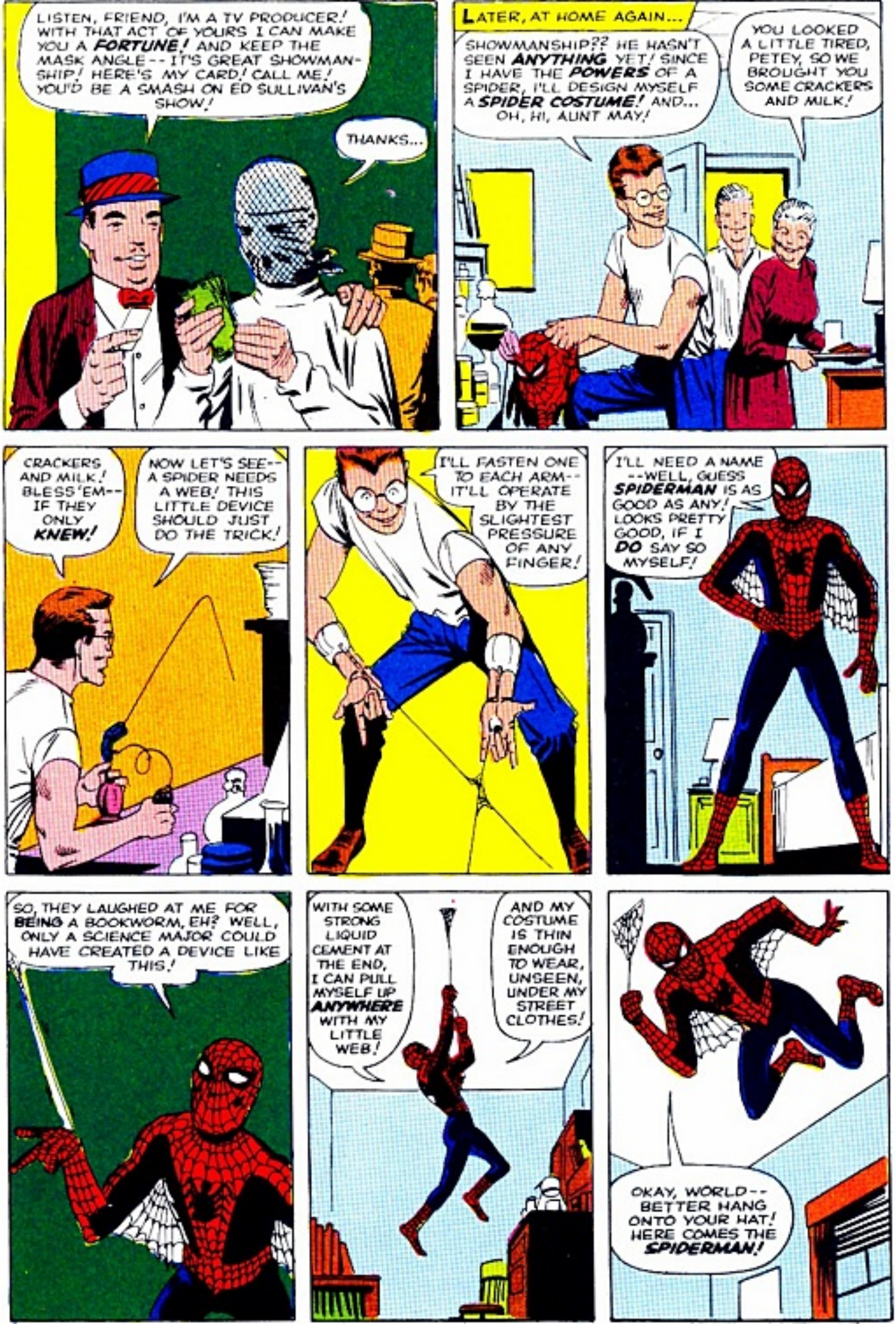
Stan Lee & S. Ditko

AS YOU MAY HAVE GATHERED, PETER PARKER WAS FAR FROM BEING THE BIGGEST MAN ON CAMPUS! BUT, HIS UNCLE BEN THOUGHT HE WAS A PRETTY SPECIAL LAD...
YOU'RE NOT FOOLIN' ME, PETEY! I KNOW YOU'RE AWAKE -- AND IT'S TIME FOR SCHOOL!
GOSH, UNCLE BEN--YOU'RE WORSE THAN A ROOM FULL OF ALARM CLOCKS!
AS FOR PETE'S AUNT MAY, SHE THOUGHT THE SUN ROSE AND SET UPON HER NEPHEW!
I COOKED YOUR FAVORITE BREAKFAST, PETEY--WHEATCAKES!
DON'T FATTEN HIM UP TOO MUCH, DEAR! I CAN HARDLY OUT-WRESTLE HIM NOW!
THE FACULTY AT MIDTOWN HIGH WERE ALSO FOND OF THE CLEAN-CUT, HARD-WORKING HONOR STUDENT!
KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK, PARKER, AND YOU'RE SURE TO RATE A SCHOLORSHIP WHEN YOU GRADUATE!
I'LL DO MY BEST, SIR!
BUT ALAS, OTHER TEEN-AGERS CAN SOMETIMES, UNWITTINGLY, BE SO VERY CRUEL TO A SHY YOUNG MAN...
SALLY, I, EH, WAS WONDERING IF YOU'RE BUSY TONIGHT...?
PETER, FOR THE UMPTEENTH TIME, YOU'RE JUST NOT MY TYPE...
...NOT WHEN DREAM BOATS LIKE FLASH THOMPSON ARE AROUND!
I ADMIRE YOUR GOOD TASTE, DOLL! GET LOST, BOOKWORM!
LOOK, THERE'S A GREAT NEW EXHIBIT AT THE SCIENCE HALL TONIGHT! WOULD ANY OF YOU LIKE TO GO WITH ME?
SCIENCE HALL! HAH!
YOU STICK TO SCIENCE, SON! WE'LL TAKE THE CHICKS!
YES, FOR SOME, BEING A TEEN-AGER HAS MANY HEART-BREAKING MOMENTS!
SEE YOU AROUND, BOOKWORM!
GIVE OUR REGARDS TO THE ATOM-SMASHERS, PETER!
SOME DAY I'LL SHOW THEM! SOB SOME DAY THEY'LL BE SORRY! --SORRY THAT THEY LAUGHED AT ME!
SCIENCE EXHIBIT
EXPERIMENTS IN RADIO-ACTIVITY
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
ROOM 30

AND, A FEW MINUTES LATER, PETER PARKER FORGETS THE TAUNTS OF HIS CLASSMATES AS HE IS TRANSPORTED TO ANOTHER WORLD -- THE FASCINATING WORLD OF ATOMIC SCIENCE!
AND NOW FOR A DEMONSTRATION OF HOW WE CAN CONTROL RADIOACTIVE RAYS HERE IN THE LABORATORY...
BUT, AS THE EXPERIMENT BEGINS, NO ONE NOTICES A TINY SPIDER, DESCENDING FROM THE CEILING ON AN ALMOST INVISIBLE STRAND OF WEB...
A SPIDER WHOM FATE HAS GIVEN A STARRING, IF BRIEF, ROLE TO PLAY IN THE DRAMA WE CALL LIFE!
ACCIDENTALLY ABSORBING A FANTASTIC AMOUNT OF RADIOACTIVITY, THE DYING INSECT, IN SUDDEN SHOCK, BITES THE NEAREST LIVING THING, AT THE SPLIT SECOND BEFORE LIFE EBBS FROM ITS RADIOACTIVE BODY!
OW!
A-A SPIDER! IT BIT ME! BUT, WHY IS IT BURNING SO? WHY IS IT GLOWING THAT WAY??
MY HEAD-- IT FEELS STRANGE! I-I NEED SOME AIR!
LOOKS AS THOUGH OUR EXPERIMENT UNNERVED YOUNG PARKER!
TOO BAD! HE MUST HAVE A WEAK STOMACH!
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME? I FEEL-- DIFFERENT! AS THOUGH MY ENTIRE BODY IS CHARGED WITH SOME SORT OF FANTASTIC ENERGY!
HONK! HONK!
WRAPPED IN HIS THOUGHTS, PETER DOESN'T HEAR THE AUTO WHICH NARROWLY MISSES HIM, UNTIL THE LAST INSTANT! AND THEN, UNNOTICED BY THE RIDERS, HE UNTHINKINGLY LEAPS TO SAFETY-- BUT, WHAT A LEAP IT IS!
THAT WAS ONE EGGHEAD WHO WON'T DAYDREAM ANY MORE WHEN HE CROSSES A STREET!
YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN!


WHAT'S COME OVER ME! I-I'M SCALING THIS WALL JUST AS EASILY AS I CAN WALK!
MOMMY! LOOK AT THE MAN WALKING UP THE SIDE OF A BUILDING!
THAT'S THE LAST HORROR MOVIE I TAKE YOU TO, YOUNG MAN!
IT'S INCREDIBLE! I REACHED THE ROOF IN JUST A FEW SECONDS!
WHAT'S THIS?? I CRUSHED THIS STEEL PIPE AS THOUGH IT WERE PAPER!
IT'S THE SPIDER! IT HAS TO BE! SOMEHOW -- IN SOME MIRACULOUS WAY, HIS BITE HAS TRANSFERRED HIS OWN POWER -- TO ME!
I CAN WALK DOWN THIS CABLE AS EFFORTLESSLY AS THE SPIDER ITSELF CAN GLIDE ALONG ITS WEB!
I-I'VE GOT TO HAVE TIME TO THINK! I'VE GOT TO PLAN WHAT TO DO WITH THIS UNBELIEVABLE ABILITY WHICH FATE HAS GIVEN ME!
A FEW MINUTES LATER...
HMMM... THIS WILL BE A GOOD CHANCE TO TEST MY POWER AGAIN!
$100 TO THE MAN WHO CAN STAY IN THE RING THREE MINUTES WITH CRUSHER HOGAN
FILLED WITH EXCITEMENT, PETE RACES BACK HOME, AND...
I'LL PUT ON SOME OLD CLOTHES, AND LEAVE MY GLASSES HERE! BUT--WHAT IF I FAIL? I DON'T WANT TO BE A LAUGHING STOCK! I-I'LL FIND SOME WAY TO DISGUISE MYSELF!


A FEW MINUTES LATER...
I'LL TRY FOR THAT HUNDRED DOLLARS, CRUSHER!
WELL, WELL! IF IT AIN'T A LITTLE MASKED MARVEL! STEP UP, SUCKER!
NOW JUST RELAX, SHORTY! I'LL TRY TO MAKE THIS AS PAINLESS AS POSSIBLE!
IT WORKS! I HAVE THE SPEED, THE AGILITY, THE VERY STRENGTH OF A GIGANTIC SPIDER!
HEY!
PUT ME DOWN! YOU WIN! YOU WIN!
YOU--YOU'RE NOT HUMAN! NOBODY CAN DO THAT!
WANNA BET?
GREATEST ACT I'VE EVER SEEN!
SENSATIONAL! FANTASTIC! AND THAT MASK GIMMICK GIVES HIM JUST THE RIGHT TOUCH OF MYSTERY! HE WAS TERRIFIC!
HMMM, THAT MASKED CHARACTER MAY BE JUST WHAT I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR!


LISTEN, FRIEND, I'M A TV PRODUCER! WITH THAT ACT OF YOURS I CAN MAKE YOU A FORTUNE! AND KEEP THE MASK ANGLE -- IT'S GREAT SHOWMANSHIP! HERE'S MY CARD! CALL ME! YOU'D BE A SMASH ON ED SULLIVAN'S SHOW!
THANKS...
LATER, AT HOME AGAIN...
SHOWMANSHIP?? HE HASN'T SEEN ANYTHING YET! SINCE I HAVE THE POWERS OF A SPIDER, I'LL DESIGN MYSELF A SPIDER COSTUME! AND... OH, HI, AUNT MAY!
YOU LOOKED A LITTLE TIRED, PETEY, SO WE BROUGHT YOU SOME CRACKERS AND MILK!
CRACKERS AND MILK! BLESS 'EM-- IF THEY ONLY KNEW!
NOW LET'S SEE-- A SPIDER NEEDS A WEB! THIS LITTLE DEVICE SHOULD JUST DO THE TRICK!
I'LL FASTEN ONE TO EACH ARM-- IT'LL OPERATE BY THE SLIGHTEST PRESSURE OF ANY FINGER!
I'LL NEED A NAME --WELL, GUESS SPIDERMAN IS AS GOOD AS ANY! LOOKS PRETTY GOOD, IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF!
SO, THEY LAUGHED AT ME FOR BEING A BOOKWORM, EH? WELL, ONLY A SCIENCE MAJOR COULD HAVE CREATED A DEVICE LIKE THIS!
WITH SOME STRONG LIQUID CEMENT AT THE END, I CAN PULL MYSELF UP ANYWHERE WITH MY LITTLE WEB!
AND MY COSTUME IS THIN ENOUGH TO WEAR, UNSEEN, UNDER MY STREET CLOTHES!
OKAY, WORLD-- BETTER HANG ONTO YOUR HAT! HERE COMES THE SPIDERMAN!

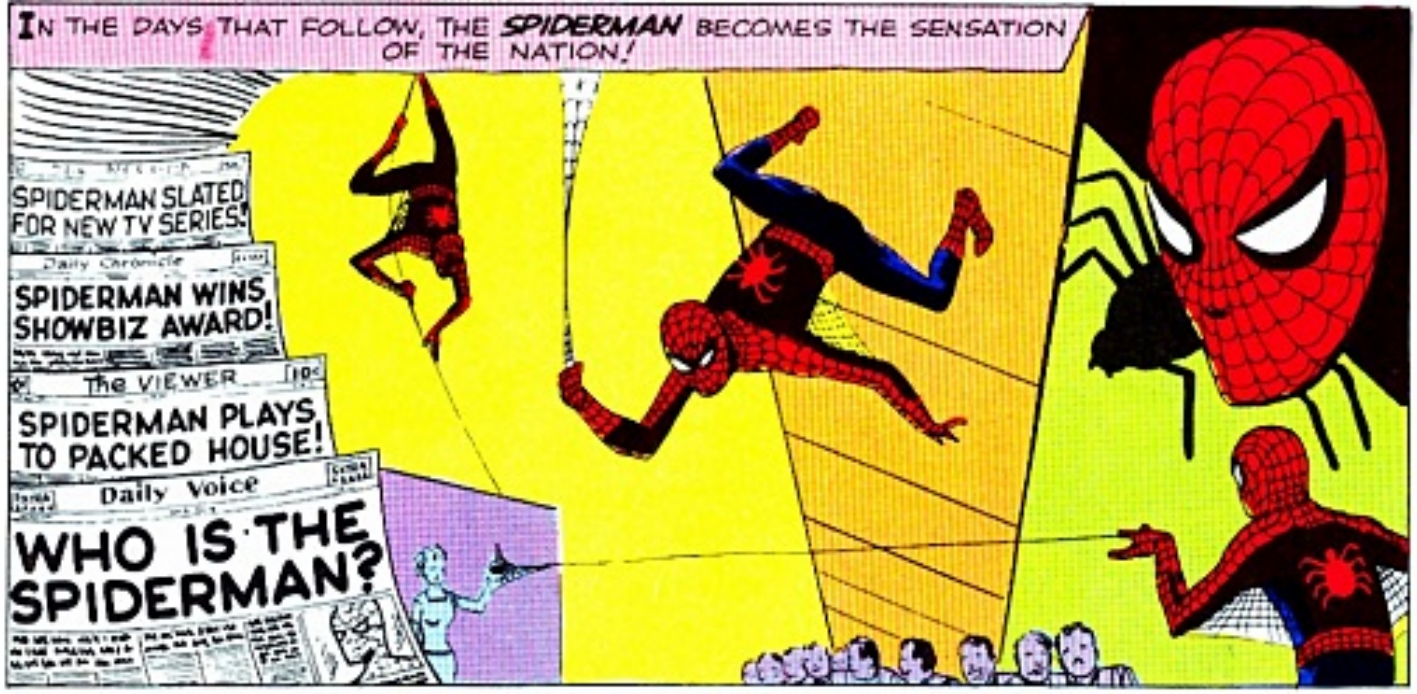
PART 2
NOW ANYBODY WITH THE INTELLIGENCE OF A SEVEN YEAR OLD KNOWS THAT IF A MAN APPEARED ON TV WHO SEEMED TO BE MORE SPIDER THAN HUMAN, HE'D BE AN OVERNIGHT SENSATION! ESPECIALLY WHEN HIS FEATS WERE PERFORMED WITHOUT THE HELP OF TRICK PHOTOGRAPHY! WELL, YOU CAN JUST IMAGINE HOW THE PUBLIC REACTED TO SPIDERMAN!
I'M SEEIN' IT WITH MY OWN EYES, AND I STILL DON'T BELIEVE IT!

SURE THEY LOOK AMAZED, INCREDIBLE, AWE-STRICKEN! WOULDN'T YOU???

AFTER ALL, WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU SAW A MAN WITH HIS OWN FANTASTIC SPIDER WEB???

OKAY, SPIDERMAN-- CUT! THAT'S ENOUGH! DON'T SHOW 'EM TOO MUCH! LEAVE 'EM BEGGIN' FOR MORE!

AS HIS FIRST TV SPECTACULAR ENDS, PETER PARKER BREATHES THE FIRST SWEET SCENT OF FAME AND SUCCESS!
I'M FROM LIFE! WE'LL PAY ANY PRICE FOR A PICTURE SPREAD!
SIGN WITH ME! I'LL PUT YOU IN THE MOVIES!
WAIT! WE WANT AN INTERVIEW!
SEE MY AGENT, BOYS! I'M BUSY!
WHEW! RID OF 'EM AT LAST!
HEY! WHAT'S GOIN' ON??
STOP! THIEF! STOP HIM! IF HE MAKES IT TO THE ELEVATOR, HE'LL GET AWAY!
MADE IT!
I'M SAFE NOW! THAT COP CAN NEVER GET DOWN TO THE LOBBY AS FAST AS I CAN IN THIS HIGH-SPEED EXPRESS ELEVATOR! LUCKY THAT GOON IN A COSTUME DIDN'T STOP ME!
WHAT'S WITH YOU, MISTER?? ALL YOU HADDA DO WAS TRIP HIM, OR HOLD HIM JUST FOR A MINUTE!
SORRY, PAL! THAT'S YOUR JOB! I'M THRU BEING PUSHED AROUND --BY ANYONE! FROM NOW ON I JUST LOOK OUT FOR NUMBER ONE --THAT MEANS--ME!
I OUGHTTA RUN YOU IN--
SAVE YOUR BREATH, BUDDY! I'VE GOT THINGS TO DO!
AND, A FEW HOURS LATER...
PETER, YOU KNOW THAT MICROSCOPE YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED? YOUR UNCLE AND I BOUGHT IT FOR YOU THIS AFTERNOON!
GOSH, THAT'S TERRIFIC!
YOU'RE THE GREATEST FAMILY ANY FELLA EVER HAD!
THEY'RE THE ONLY ONES WHO'VE EVER BEEN KIND TO ME! I'LL SEE TO IT THAT THEY'RE ALWAYS HAPPY, BUT THE REST OF THE WORLD CAN GO HANG FOR ALL I CARE!


IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOW, THE SPIDERMAN BECOMES THE SENSATION OF THE NATION!
SPIDERMAN SLATED FOR NEW TV SERIES!
Daily Chronicle
SPIDERMAN WINS SHOWBIZ AWARD!
The VIEWER
SPIDERMAN PLAYS TO PACKED HOUSE!
Daily Voice
WHO IS THE SPIDERMAN?

AND, ONE EVENING AS PETER PARKER RETURNS HOME FROM A PERSONAL APPEARANCE...
A POLICE CAR! IN FRONT OF OUR HOUSE! WHAT CAN BE WRONG??

BAD NEWS, SON--YOUR UNCLE HAS BEEN SHOT--MURDERED!
UNCLE BEN --DEAD! NO! NO, IT CAN'T BE!

WHO DID IT?? WHO SHOT HIM??
IT WAS A BURGLAR--YOUR UNCLE SURPRISED HIM! BUT DON'T WORRY, LAD! WE'VE GOT HIM TRAPPED! HE'S IN THE OLD ACME WAREHOUSE AT THE WATERFRONT! WE'LL GET HIM!

YOUR AUNT IS NEXT DOOR--THE NEIGHBORS ARE LOOKING AFTER HER! WAIT--
I'VE GOT TO GO! I'VE GOT TO GET HIM!

I KNOW THE OLD ACME WAREHOUSE! IT'S BEEN DESERTED FOR YEARS! A KILLER COULD HOLD OFF AN ARMY IN THAT GLOOMY, OLD PLACE!

BUT HE WON'T HOLD OFF--SPIDERMAN!

THE WAREHOUSE IS AT THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN...
...BUT I'LL BE THERE IN NO TIME!
MEANWHILE...
HE'S IN THERE SOMEWHERE, BUT HE'LL PICK US OFF LIKE FLIES IF WE CHARGE HIM!
ALL I GOTTA DO IS HOLD 'EM OFF TILL THE MOON GOES DOWN, THEN I OUGHTTA BE ABLE TO SLIP AWAY IN THE DARK!
YOU'LL NEVER ESCAPE AGAIN, MURDERER!
HUH?? WHAT THE--???
SURPRISED TO SEE ME?
NOT HALF SO SURPRISED AS YOU'RE GOING TO BE!
GOTTA GET AWAY! GOTTA HIDE! I MUST BE SEEIN' THINGS!

THERE'S NO PLACE ON EARTH WHERE YOU CAN HIDE FROM ME!
FIRST, MY WEB WILL RELIEVE YOU OF YOUR GUN!
WHIZZZT!
AND THEN MY FISTS WILL DO THE REST!
THAT-- THAT FACE! IT'S-- OH NO, IT CAN'T BE!
IT'S THE FUGITIVE WHO RAN PAST ME! THE ONE I DIDN'T STOP WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE!
I HATE TO DO IT, BUT WE'LL HAVE TO RUSH HIM NOW! CAN'T TAKE A CHANCE OF HIM SLIPPING BY IN THE DARK!
CAPTAIN-- LOOK!!
IT'S HIM!
ON A-- SPIDER'S WEB!
AND, A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY...
MY FAULT--ALL MY FAULT! IF ONLY I HAD STOPPED HIM WHEN I COULD HAVE! BUT I DIDN'T--AND NOW --UNCLE BEN-- IS DEAD...
AND A LEAN, SILENT FIGURE SLOWLY FADES INTO THE GATHERING DARKNESS, AWARE AT LAST THAT IN THIS WORLD, WITH GREAT POWER THERE MUST ALSO COME--GREAT RESPONSIBILITY!
AND SO A LEGEND IS BORN AND A NEW NAME IS ADDED TO THE ROSTER OF THOSE WHO MAKE THE WORLD OF FANTASY THE MOST EXCITING REALM OF ALL!
BE SURE TO SEE THE NEXT ISSUE OF AMAZING FANTASY--- FOR THE FURTHER AMAZING EXPLOITS OF AMERICA'S MOST DIFFERENT NEW TEEN-AGE IDOL--SPIDERMAN!
the End

Okay. Now let's skip a half-dozen years or so to 1969. Steve Ditko has long since departed the hallowed bullpen vale to seek fame and fortune in the real world, resulting in the adventures of your friendly neighborhood wall-crawler being drawn by one of Marvel's top talents, the fantastically gifted John Romita. Under Jazzy Johnny's artistic aegis, Spidey has graduated high school and now attends good ol' Eastern State University. He has also become incontestably the most popular comic-book superhero in all the world.

In the episode that follows, you'll meet his gorgeous, star-crossed girlfriend, Gwendolyn, as well as the anti-social Shocker—just one of the countless colorful supervillains our dauntless hero dares defy. You'll also see the now-classic "Jameson Loses His Cool" episode, as well as some evidence of Marvel's typically untypical exotically exaggerated action scenes.

Most of all, you'll see a sparkling example of the way we weave plot, subplot, and counterplot relentlessly together, blending drama with action, with romance, with satire, until you clamor for a scorecard. And if you gather from this starry-eyed little soliloquy that I'm kinda proud of our wondrous web-head, you better believe it!

Oh, just one more thing. Don't get too uptight about poor Aunt May's condition. It's a good bet that she'll still be around, still tottering on the brink, till Spidey becomes a septuagenarian. She'd better —she's the easiest one to draw.

SPIDER-MAN
12¢
IND.
72
MAY
the AMAZING
SPIDER-MAN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
ROCKED BY THE SHOCKER!

ROCKED BY.. THE SHOCKER!

FORGIVE MY SUDDEN ENTRANCE, STACY...
BUT I HAPPEN TO BE IN A HURRY!
NO, NO, SPIDEY-FAN...YOU DIDN'T WANDER IN AT THE MIDDLE OF OUR STORY! IT'S JUST THAT WE HAVE SO MUCH ACTION COMING UP, THAT WE CAN'T AFFORD TO WASTE A MINUTE! SO, LET'S GO, GO, GO...
ZAK!
THE SHOCKER!
WHAT DO Y... UNHH!
STAN (THE MAN) LEE AUTHOR
BIG JOHN BUSCEMA INNOVATOR
JAZZY JOHNNY ROMITA and JIM (MADMAN) MOONEY ILLUSTRATORS
SWINGIN' SAMMY ROSEN, LETTERER
IF OUR VILLAIN LOOKS FAMILIAR TO YOU, IT'S BECAUSE YOU'VE PREVIOUSLY THRILLED TO HIS PULSATING POWER IN SPIDER-MAN #46! BUT TAKE IT FROM US... YOU'VE NEVER SEEN HIM AS DANGEROUS AS NOW...

LUCKY FOR HIM I USED MY VIBRO-POWER AT ITS WEAKEST INTENSITY!
HE'LL BE CONSCIOUS AGAIN WITHIN A MATTER OF MINUTES!
ZZZAAP!
BUT, I'LL HAVE FOUND WHAT I SEEK BY THEN!
NO SAFE CAN RESIST MY VIBRATING BLAST!
ACCORDING TO THE NEWS-PAPERS, THE PRICELESS CLAY TABLET SHOULD BE IN HERE...
SINCE SPIDER-MAN WAS DUMB ENOUGH NOT TO KEEP IT, AND SELL IT FOR HIMSELF!
BUT THE SHOCKER HAS NO SUCH SCRUPLES!
THE TABLET MUST BE MINE!
I'M IN LUCK!
STACY HASN'T YET RETURNED IT TO THE COLLEGE!
THIS ANCIENT PIECE OF PETRIFIED STONE IS WORTH A KING'S RANSOM!
DAD! DAD! WHAT WAS THAT NOISE??
IT SOUNDED LIKE PART OF THE BUILDING CAVING IN!!
DAD! WHERE ARE YOU? WHY DON'T YOU ANSWER?
WHAT'S THAT? ...FOOT-STEPS... RUNNING TOWARDS ME!

A GIRL! MUST BE HIS DAUGHTER!
OH, NO!
NO!

YOU'RE IN LUCK, GORGEOUS!
I ALREADY GOT WHAT I WANT... SO I'M CUTTING OUT!
AND NO NEED TO STRAIN YOUR TONSILS...
EXCEPT FOR A HEADACHE, HE'LL BE AS GOOD AS NEW!

DAD... WHO WAS HE? WHAT DID HE DO?
I THOUGHT... THE TABLET WOULD BE SAFE... HERE WITH ME!
I DIDN'T COUNT ON BEING ATTACKED... BY SOMEONE AS POWERFUL ... AS THE SHOCKER!
GET TO THE PHONE, DEAR! CALL THE POLICE!

DAD, DIDN'T THE SHOCKER ONCE BATTLE SPIDER-MAN TO A STANDSTILL?
IF HE'S AT LARGE AGAIN...
HOW CAN ANYONE HOPE TO STOP HIM?

WE MUST ADMIT THAT GROOVY GWENDY HAS POSED A MOST INTERESTING QUESTION! BUT, BEFORE TRYING TO ANSWER IT, LET'S VISIT A SEEDY LITTLE PAWNSHOP ON A SEEDY LITTLE SIDE-STREET---
WHOEVER THAT IS OUTSIDE, BEAT IT!
I'M CLOSIN' FOR THE NIGHT!
ZAK!
DON'T COUNT ON IT, MISTER!
THE SHOCKER!
WH-WHAT'RE YOU DOIN' HERE?
I'M JUST SMALL POTATOES TO A GUY LIKE YOU!
TO ME YOU'RE NOTHING!
BUT YOU KNOW HOW TO REACH ---THE BIG BOYS!
I WANT YOU TO CONTACT THEM! TELL 'EM I HAVE THE STOLEN TABLET!
I'M GONNA FENCE IT TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER!
YOU CAN'T! IT'S TOO LATE!

EVER SINCE SPIDER-MAN SNATCHED IT FROM THE KINGPIN HIMSELF, NO ONE'LL TOUCH IT!
IT'S TOO HOT! NO ONE WANTS TO TANGLE WITH THE WALL-CRAWLER AGAIN!
THEY DON'T, HUH?
KUBAM!
ZAK!
SO THEY'RE AFRAID OF THE WEB-SLINGER, ARE THEY?
I'LL GIVE 'EM SOMETHING TO REALLY BE SCARED OF!
ZAK!

AND JUST IN CASE NO ONE GETS THE MESSAGE...!
TIKKLAGG!
HOLY SMOKE! IT LOOKS LIKE ANOTHER RIOT!
AND IN THE MIDDLE OF WINTER, YET!
HELP... POLICE!! ANYONE!!
A FEW MINUTES LATER...
...THE PUBLIC IS CAUTIONED TO AVOID THE EAST FORTIES...
WHERE POLICE ARE CONDUCTING A HOUSE-TO-HOUSE SEARCH FOR THE SHOCKER...
THE SHOCKER... AT LARGE AGAIN!
LIKE, DO THEY HAVETA BREAK IN ON THE SOUL PARADE JUST ON ACCOUNTA SOME COSTUMED NUT?
I THOUGHT HE WAS IN JAIL... BUT IF HE'S ON THE LOOSE ONCE MORE--

...THEN SPIDER-MAN BETTER MAKE THE SCENE... BUT FAST!
HEY! HE JUST GOT ON... A COUPLE OF BLOCKS AGO!
CRAZY TEEN-AGERS!
WHATEVER HAPPENS NEXT, BETTER HAPPEN FAST!
I FINALLY CONVINCED AUNT MAY TO GO SOUTH FOR HER HEALTH...
AND HER TRAIN LEAVES IN AN HOUR!
IF I'M NOT THERE TO SEE HER OFF...
SHE'LL BE SO WORRIED ABOUT ME, THAT SHE WON'T GO!
UH OH! SPIDEY SENSE IS STARTING TO TINGLE!
THE SHOCKER MUST BE NEARBY!

WHILE, BACK AT THE PAWN SHOP...
NOT YET, INSPECTOR!
NO TRACE OF THAT TABLET, EITHER!
ANY TRACE OF HIM, HARRIS?
LOOKS LIKE WE JUST LOST HIM ON THE ROOFTOPS!
BUT THERE'S A MILLION PLACES HE COULD HAVE STASHED IT AWAY BY NOW!
IT ALL HAPPENED SO FAST!
THE SHOCKER AIN'T HUMAN! ---NO ONE CAN TAKE 'IM!

MAYBE NOT... BUT JUST ABOUT NOW, SOMEONE'S GONNA TRY...
HOLD IT, BIG BOY!
YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE!
WHO SAID THAT??

I'LL GIVE YOU A HINT, MAN...
IT'S NOT ARETHA FRANKLIN!
BTOK!

HE'S STILL CONSCIOUS!
MUST HAVE USED HIS VIBRATING POWER AGAIN, TO DEFLECT MY BLOW!
I ALMOST FORGOT WHAT A DEADLY OPPONENT THE SHOCKER CAN BE!
SPIDER-MAN! I THOUGHT YOU'D DROP BY!
HE DOESN'T EVEN SOUND HURT!

LAST TIME WE FOUGHT, YOU MANAGED TO ESCAPE WITH YOUR LIFE!
YOU SHOULD HAVE QUIT... WHILE YOU WERE AHEAD!
ZAK!
THERE'S ONE FOR STARTERS!
KAIK!
ANOTHER BLAST!
HE'S TRYING TO BRING THE CHIMNEY DOWN ON ME!
AHH! YOU'RE AS NIMBLE AS EVER, WALL-CRAWLER!
KRAK!
...NOT THAT IT WILL DO YOU ANY GOOD!
ALTHOUGH I COULD PROBABLY FINISH YOU OFF WITH A SUDDEN DOUBLE BLAST...
I PREFER TO TOY WITH YOU AWHILE!
...FOR OLD TIMES' SAKE!
HE BLASTED A HOLE... IN THE FLOOR OF THE ROOF... BELOW ME!!
I--I'M FALLING!
THWIPPP
BUT IF HE THINKS HE'S LOST ME...
HE'D BETTER THINK AGAIN!
KAIK!

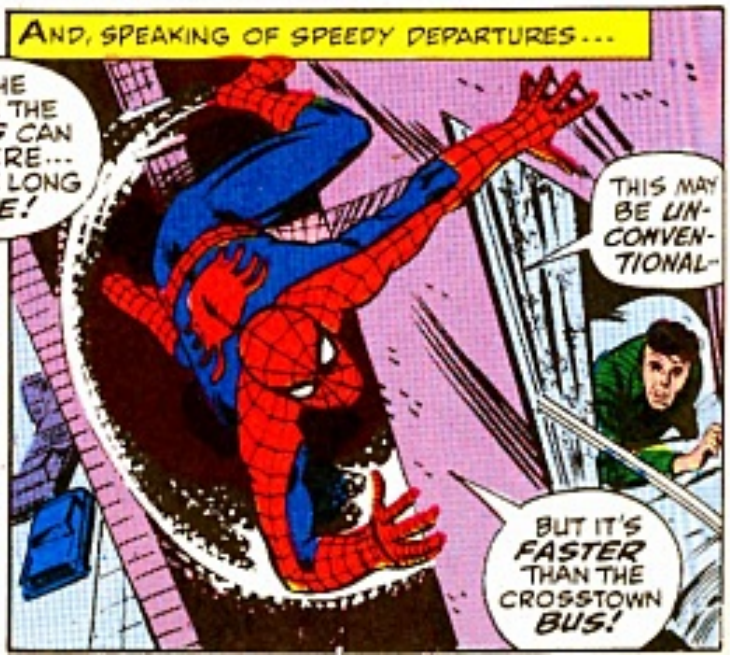
WHILE YOU'RE FALLING, WEB-HEAD... JUST THOUGHT I'D LET YOU KNOW...
I'VE HIDDEN THAT BLASTED TABLET IN A PLACE WHERE NO-BODY'LL EVER FIND IT AGAIN!
SO YOUR BATTLE WITH THE KING-PIN WAS A TOTAL WASTE OF TIME
AND BEFORE I FORGET... HAPPY LANDINGS!
WHUPPFFF!
SAME TO YOU, BIG MOUTH!
THOP!
WHAT DO I DO NOW? DELIVER HIM TO THE LAW...
OR HOLD ON TO HIM... TILL I LEARN WHERE HE HID THE TABLET?
WHATEVER I DO... IT HAD BETTER BE QUICK...
IF I DON'T WANT TO MISS AUNT MAY!
FUNNY... I DIDN'T THINK THIS JOKER WOULD BE SO EASY TO...
I NOTICE YOU'VE THROWN CAUTION TO THE WINDS, YOU FOOL!
UH OH! I WAS RIGHT!
A DANGEROUS ERROR, WHEN BATTLING THE SHOCKER!
DESPITE YOUR PUNY POWERS, SPIDER-MAN..
IT'S A PITY YOU CAN'T FLY!
BOK!

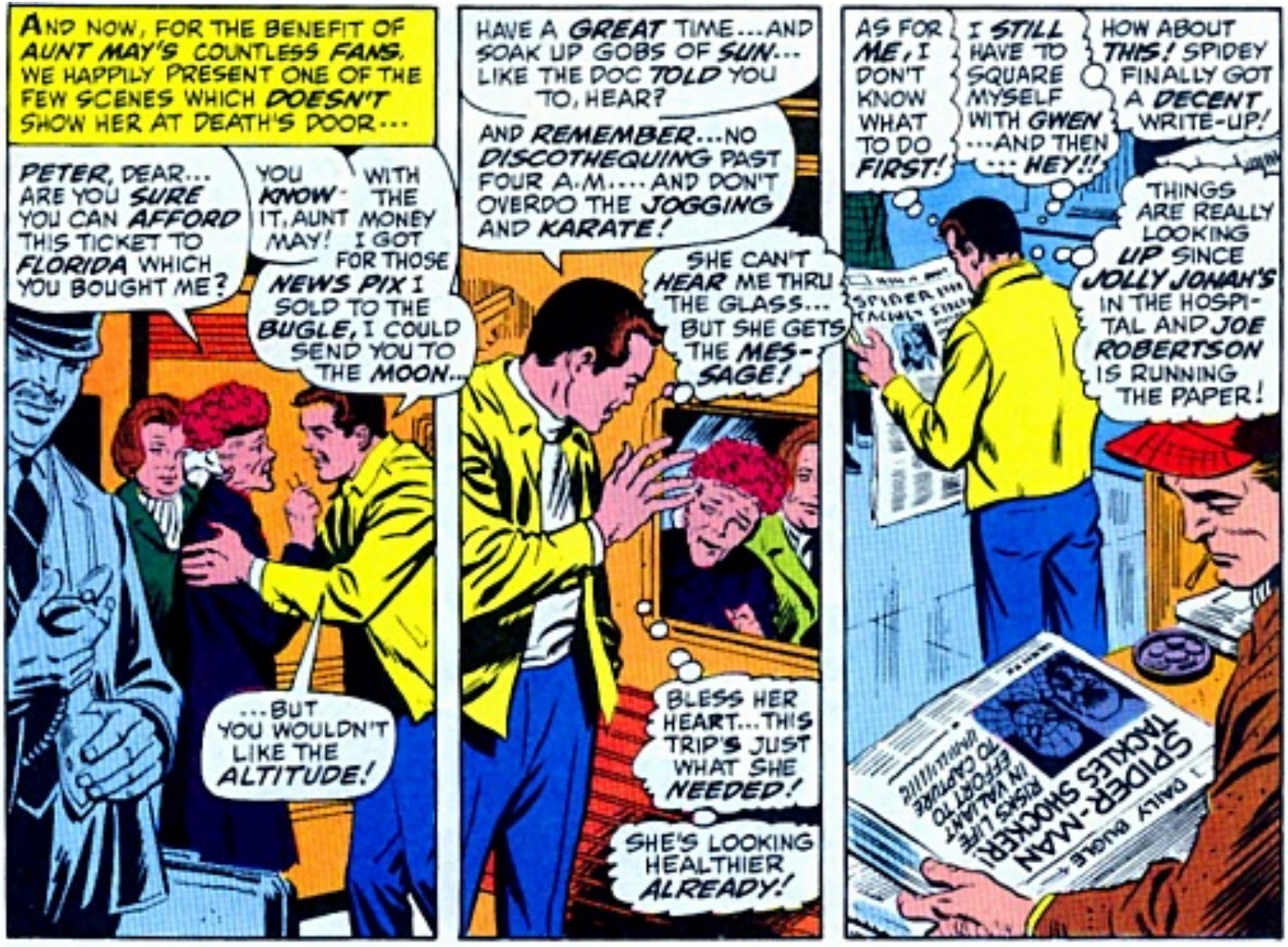
UP ON THE ROOF...
THAT CAT'S FALLING!!
IT'S SPIDER-MAN... TOPPLING TO HIS DEATH!
CLEAR THE STREET!
EVERYONE BACK... GET BACK!!
IT HAPPENED... RIGHT BEFORE OUR EYES! NOTHING CAN SAVE... NO!! LOOK!!
I CAN'T LOOK!! I CAN'T LOOK!
IT'S... HIS WEBBING!!

DIDN'T THINK I'D BE THAT EASY, DID YOU?
BUT DON'T FRET, PET...
I'LL COME SWINGIN' UP FOR ROUND TWO BEFORE YOU KNOW IT!

OH NO YOU DON'T! I'M WISE TO YOU NOW!
WELL, I'M NOT BUYING!
I'LL FINISH YOU OFF YET.. BUT IT'LL BE ME WHO PICKS THE TIME AND PLACE!
YOU WANNA DELAY ME WHILE THE COPS CORDON OFF THE STREET!
GREAT! IT'S WHAT I HOPED HE'D SAY!

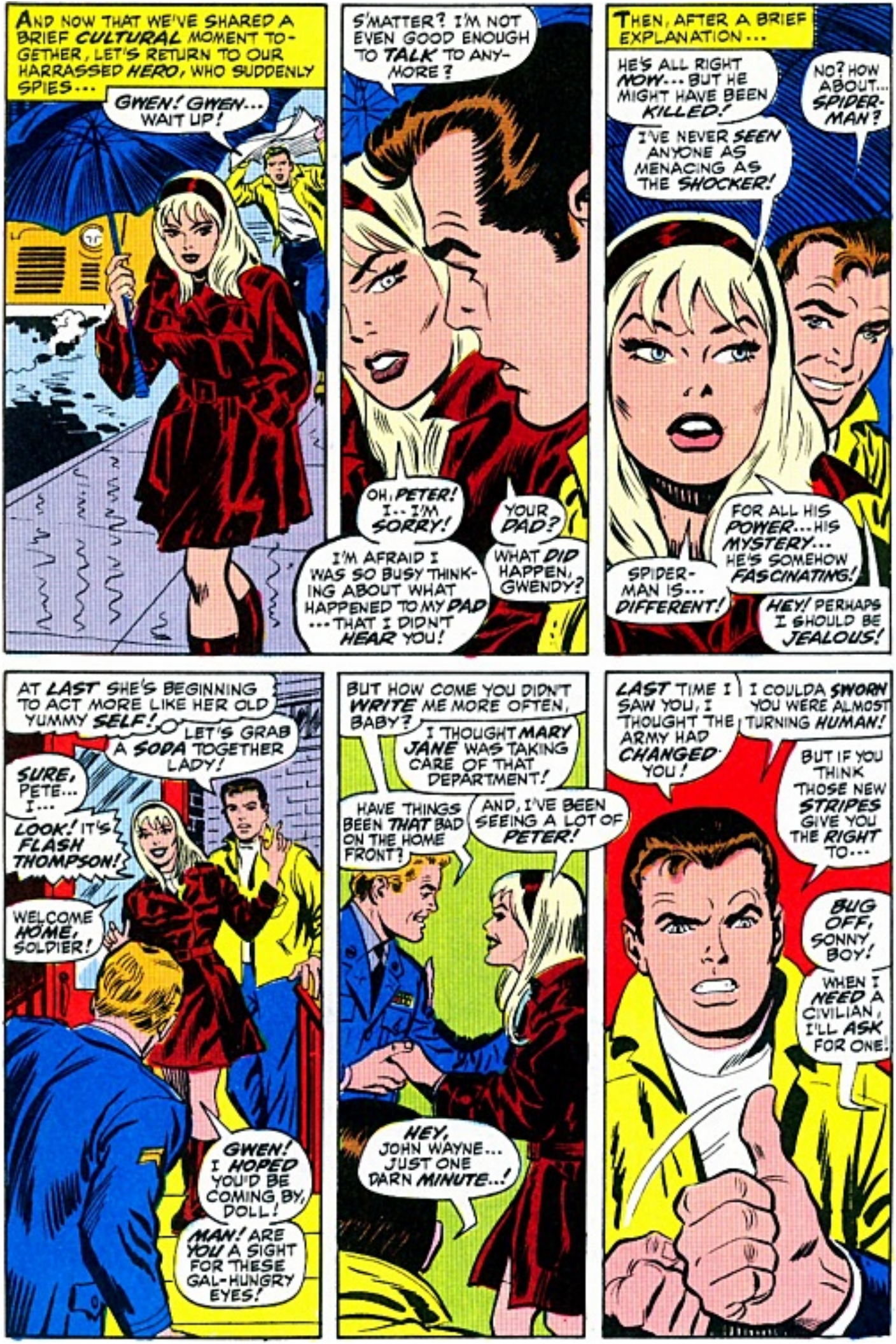
NOW I CAN MAKE THE TRAIN IN TIME!
I'LL SEND MY LITTLE SPIDEY TRACER ALONG TO KEEP HIM COMPANY!
BUT JUST SO THE SHOCKER WON'T BE LONELY...
BY THE TIME THE COPS CAN GET HERE... I'LL BE LONG GONE!


AND, SPEAKING OF SPEEDY DEPARTURES...
THIS MAY BE UNCONVENTIONAL-
BUT IT'S FASTER THAN THE CROSSTOWN BUS!


AND NOW, FOR THE BENEFIT OF AUNT MAY'S COUNTLESS FANS, WE HAPPILY PRESENT ONE OF THE FEW SCENES WHICH DOESN'T SHOW HER AT DEATH'S DOOR...
PETER, DEAR... ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN AFFORD THIS TICKET TO FLORIDA WHICH YOU BOUGHT ME?
YOU KNOW IT, AUNT MAY! WITH THE MONEY I GOT FOR THOSE NEWS PIX I SOLD TO THE BUGLE, I COULD SEND YOU TO THE MOON...
...BUT YOU WOULDN'T LIKE THE ALTITUDE!
HAVE A GREAT TIME...AND SOAK UP GOBS OF SUN... LIKE THE DOC TOLD YOU TO, HEAR?
AND REMEMBER...NO DISCOTHEQUING PAST FOUR A.M.... AND DON'T OVERDO THE JOGGING AND KARATE!
SHE CAN'T HEAR ME THRU THE GLASS... BUT SHE GETS THE MES-SAGE!
BLESS HER HEART...THIS TRIP'S JUST WHAT SHE NEEDED!
SHE'S LOOKING HEALTHIER ALREADY!
AS FOR ME, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO FIRST!
I STILL HAVE TO SQUARE MYSELF WITH GWEN ...AND THEN ... HEY!!
HOW ABOUT THIS! SPIDEY FINALLY GOT A DECENT WRITE-UP!
THINGS ARE REALLY LOOKING UP SINCE JOLLY JONAH'S IN THE HOSPI-TAL AND JOE ROBERTSON IS RUNNING THE PAPER!
SPIDER-MAN TACKLES SHOCKER!
THEN, AS THE AMAZING YOUTH IDLY SCANS THE REST OF THE NEWSPAPER, HE SUDDENLY SEES A FATEFUL ITEM...
A WRITE-UP ABOUT DR. CURT CONNORS!
HE'S WORKING ON SOME NEW, VITAL, HIGHLY-SECRET EXPERI-MENT AT HIS LAB IN THE FLORIDA EVERGLADES!
IT'S BEEN MONTHS SINCE OUR PATHS LAST CROSSED!
HE'S ONE OF THE GREATEST MEN I'VE KNOWN!
"BUT, EXCEPT FOR HIS WIFE,.. I'M THE ONLY OTHER PERSON WHO KNOWS THAT DOC CONNORS IS ALSO... THE DEADLY, SUPER-POWERFUL LIZARD!!"

"HE CAN'T HELP BECOMING THE LIZARD---HE DOESN'T WANT TO BE THE LIZARD... BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE HIM ANY THE LESS DANGEROUS!"
"I STILL REMEMBER THE LAST TIME WE FOUGHT..."*
"IT WAS ALMOST THE END OF SPIDER-MAN!"
*IF YOU'VE FORGOTTEN ISH #45, YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT! ...SNIDE STAN.
"AND, WHAT MADE MY PREDICAMENT DOUBLY TOUGH WAS..."
"I KNEW IF I INJURED THE LIZARD, I'D BE INJURING DR. CONNORS!"
"BUT, I FINALLY TRICKED HIM INTO FOLLOWING ME INSIDE A REFRIGERATED CAR..."
"WHERE THE SUB-ZERO TEMPERATURE MADE HIM WEAK ENOUGH FOR ME TO OVERCOME!"
"AND THAT WAS THE LAST THAT I, OR ANYONE, EVER AGAIN HEARD OF THE LIZARD!"
BUT WOULDN'T IT BE A GAS IF I COULD GET A SUMMER JOB... WORKING FOR DR. CONNORS?
I COULD LEARN MORE WITH HIM THAN IN A DOZEN SCIENCE CLASSES!
ANYWAY, WHAT HAVE I GOT TO LOSE?
IF I GET A CHANCE LATER ON, MAYBE I'LL DROP HIM A LINE!
BUT RIGHT NOW... I BETTER START CONCENTRATING ON THE SHOCKER AGAIN!

AND, SPEAKING OF CONCENTRATION, LET'S SEE WHAT JOLLY JONAH JAMESON IS COGITATING ABOUT RIGHT NOW---
WHAT'S THIS??!!
MY OWN NEWSPAPER CALLING SPIDER-MAN A HERO?!!
BUGLE
DAILY
THE WHOLE @#X!!#!%@?!!! COUNTRY'S GOING TO THE DOGS!
A MAN CAN'T EVEN ENJOY HIMSELF IN THE HOSPITAL ANYMORE!
I'M GONNA FIRE EVERY NINCOMPOOP ON THAT PAPER!!
MR. JAMESON! YOU'RE DELIRIOUS!
YOU'RE DING DONG RIGHT I AM!
WHEN I FIND OUT WHO WROTE THAT STORY--!!
YOU CAN'T DO THIS TO ME! GET ME MY LAWYER!
YOU'LL NEED AN UNDERTAKER IF YOU DON'T CALM DOWN!
DOCTOR! DOCTOR! HELP!
HELLO! HELLO! GET ME THE BUGLE!
NOT BAGLE, DUMMY!! BUGLE!
NO! I DON'T WANT A DING-BUSTED MUSIC STORE...I MEANT THE DAILY BUGLE!
MR. JAMESON! YOU SIMPLY MUST HOLD STILL!
NO! I DON'T WANT A DAD-BLASTED PET SHOP!!
HOW COME YOU DIDN'T GET ME A PET SHOP... WHERE THEY SELL BEAGLES?!!
GET THAT NIT-WITTED NEEDLE AWAY FROM ME!!
NO! NO! I DIDN'T MEAN YOU!
I THOUGHT I'D NEVER GET THAT TRANQUILIZER INTO HIM!
IS HE ALWAYS THAT EXCITABLE, DOCTOR?
ONLY WHEN HE'S AWAKE!
WHY DID I BECOME A PUBLISHER?
I'M TOO SENSITIVE... TOO GENTLE... FOR ALL THIS!
NOBODY... UNDERSTANDS ME... NOBODY... CARES... NOBODY... ZZZ

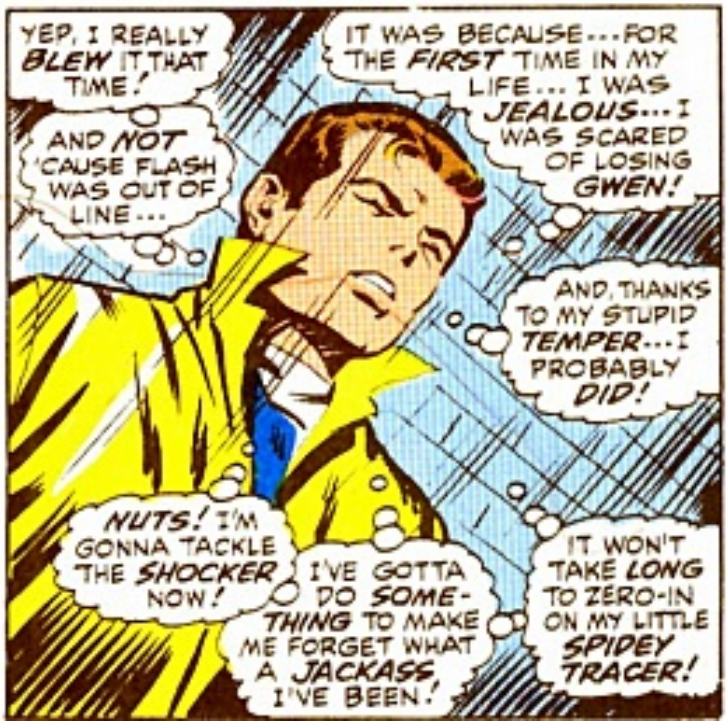

AND NOW THAT WE'VE SHARED A BRIEF CULTURAL MOMENT TOGETHER, LET'S RETURN TO OUR HARRASSED HERO, WHO SUDDENLY SPIES...
GWEN! GWEN... WAIT UP!
S'MATTER? I'M NOT EVEN GOOD ENOUGH TO TALK TO ANYMORE?
OH, PETER! I... I'M SORRY!
I'M AFRAID I WAS SO BUSY THINKING ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO MY DAD ...THAT I DIDN'T HEAR YOU!
YOUR DAD?
WHAT DID HAPPEN, GWENDY?
THEN, AFTER A BRIEF EXPLANATION...
HE'S ALL RIGHT NOW... BUT HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN KILLED!
I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYONE AS MENACING AS THE SHOCKER!
NO? HOW ABOUT... SPIDER-MAN?
SPIDER-MAN IS... DIFFERENT!
FOR ALL HIS POWER... HIS MYSTERY... HE'S SOMEHOW FASCINATING!
HEY! PERHAPS I SHOULD BE JEALOUS!
AT LAST SHE'S BEGINNING TO ACT MORE LIKE HER OLD YUMMY SELF!
LET'S GRAB A SODA TOGETHER LADY!
SURE, PETE... I...
LOOK! IT'S FLASH THOMPSON!
WELCOME HOME, SOLDIER!
GWEN! I HOPED YOU'D BE COMING BY, DOLL!
MAN! ARE YOU A SIGHT FOR THESE GAL-HUNGRY EYES!
BUT HOW COME YOU DIDN'T WRITE ME MORE OFTEN, BABY?
I THOUGHT MARY JANE WAS TAKING CARE OF THAT DEPARTMENT!
HAVE THINGS BEEN THAT BAD ON THE HOME FRONT?
AND, I'VE BEEN SEEING A LOT OF PETER!
HEY, JOHN WAYNE... JUST ONE DARN MINUTE..!
LAST TIME I SAW YOU, I THOUGHT THE ARMY HAD CHANGED YOU!
I COULDA SWORN YOU WERE ALMOST TURNING HUMAN!
BUT IF YOU THINK THOSE NEW STRIPES GIVE YOU THE RIGHT TO...
BUG OFF, SONNY BOY!
WHEN I NEED A CIVILIAN, I'LL ASK FOR ONE!

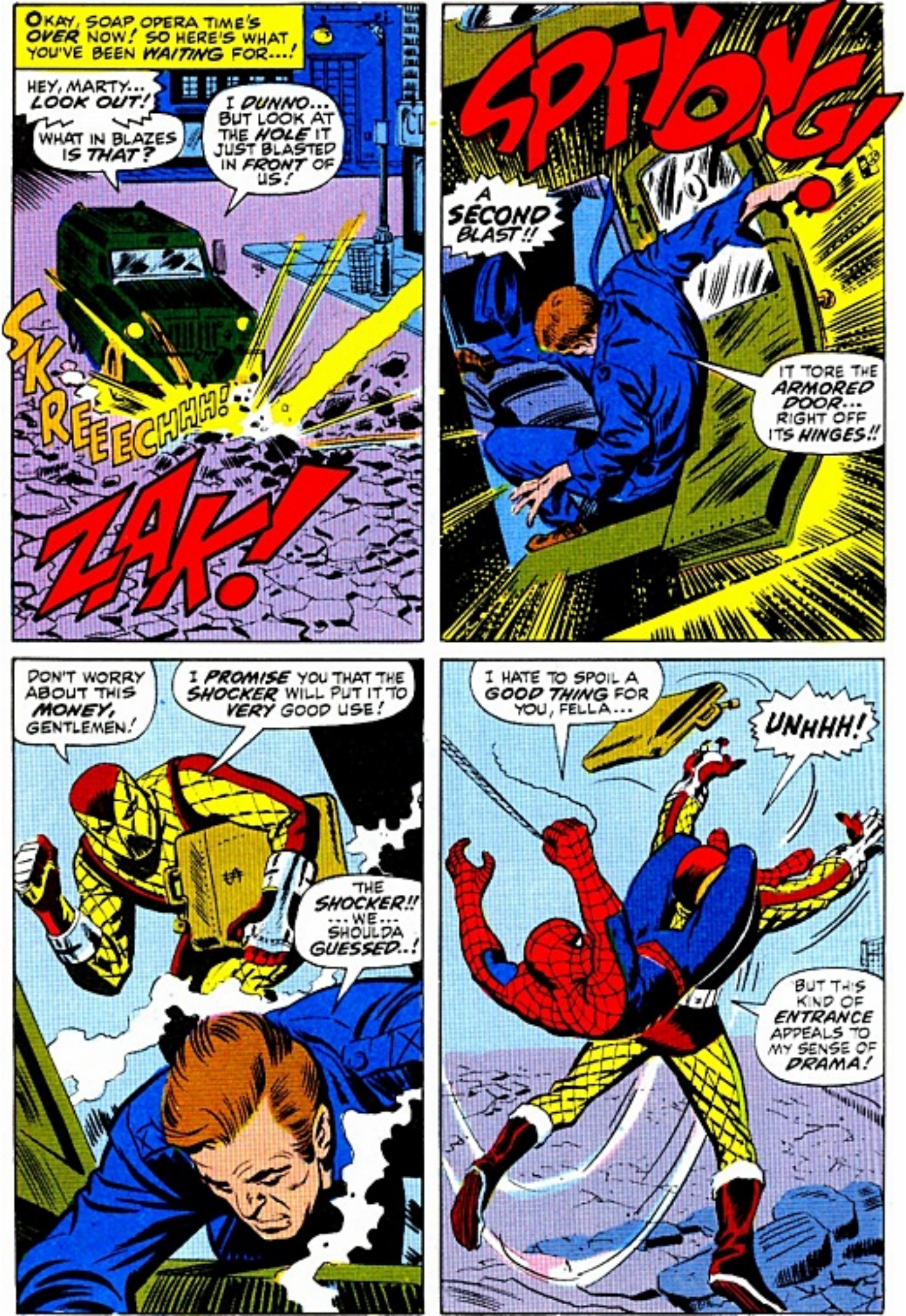
LOOK, THOMPSON, IF YOU'RE TRYING TO PUT ME DOWN IN FRONT OF MY GIRL...!
PETER! STOP IT! WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU?
FLASH WAS ONLY KIDDING... THE WAY HE USED TO!
MAYBE I'M THE ONE WHO WAS WRONG ABOUT YOU, PARKER!
MAYBE YOU'RE STILL THE SAME OLD SQUARE I ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU WERE!

OKAY... OKAY! MAYBE I WAS TOO UPTIGHT!
BUT NO ONE LIKES TO SEE SOME OTHER GUY MAKING A PLAY FOR HIS GIRL!
FACE IT, FRIEND! ANY JOE WHO DOESN'T MAKE A PLAY FOR THAT CHICK IS READY FOR EMBALMING!
ANYWAY, I'M CUTTING OUT NOW!
THANKS FOR THE WARM WELCOME!

GWEN... I--I'M SORRY!
YOU SHOULD BE, PETER!
FOR A BOY WHO'S ALWAYS MISSING WHEN THERE'S ANY TROUBLE...
IT'S STRANGE HOW HOSTILE YOU CAN BE TO A MAN WHO'S BEEN IN COMBAT!

SO... I CAN NEVER ESCAPE IT!
IN ORDER TO FUNCTION AS SPIDER-MAN, POOR PETER PARKER HAS TO TAKE OFF WHENEVER HE'S NEEDED!
THE OLD IDENTITY CONFLICT IS BACK TO HAUNT ME AGAIN!
SO HOW CAN GWEN HELP BUT THINK OF ME AS A FULL-TIME CHICKEN!
I EVEN CAUGHT THE WAY SHE CALLED ME A BOY, AND FLASH A MAN!


YEP, I REALLY BLEW IT THAT TIME!
AND NOT 'CAUSE FLASH WAS OUT OF LINE...
IT WAS BECAUSE... FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE... I WAS JEALOUS... I WAS SCARED OF LOSING GWEN!
AND, THANKS TO MY STUPID TEMPER... I PROBABLY DID!
NUTS! I'M GONNA TACKLE THE SHOCKER NOW!
I'VE GOTTA DO SOMETHING TO MAKE ME FORGET WHAT A JACKASS I'VE BEEN!
IT WON'T TAKE LONG TO ZERO-IN ON MY LITTLE SPIDEY TRACER!

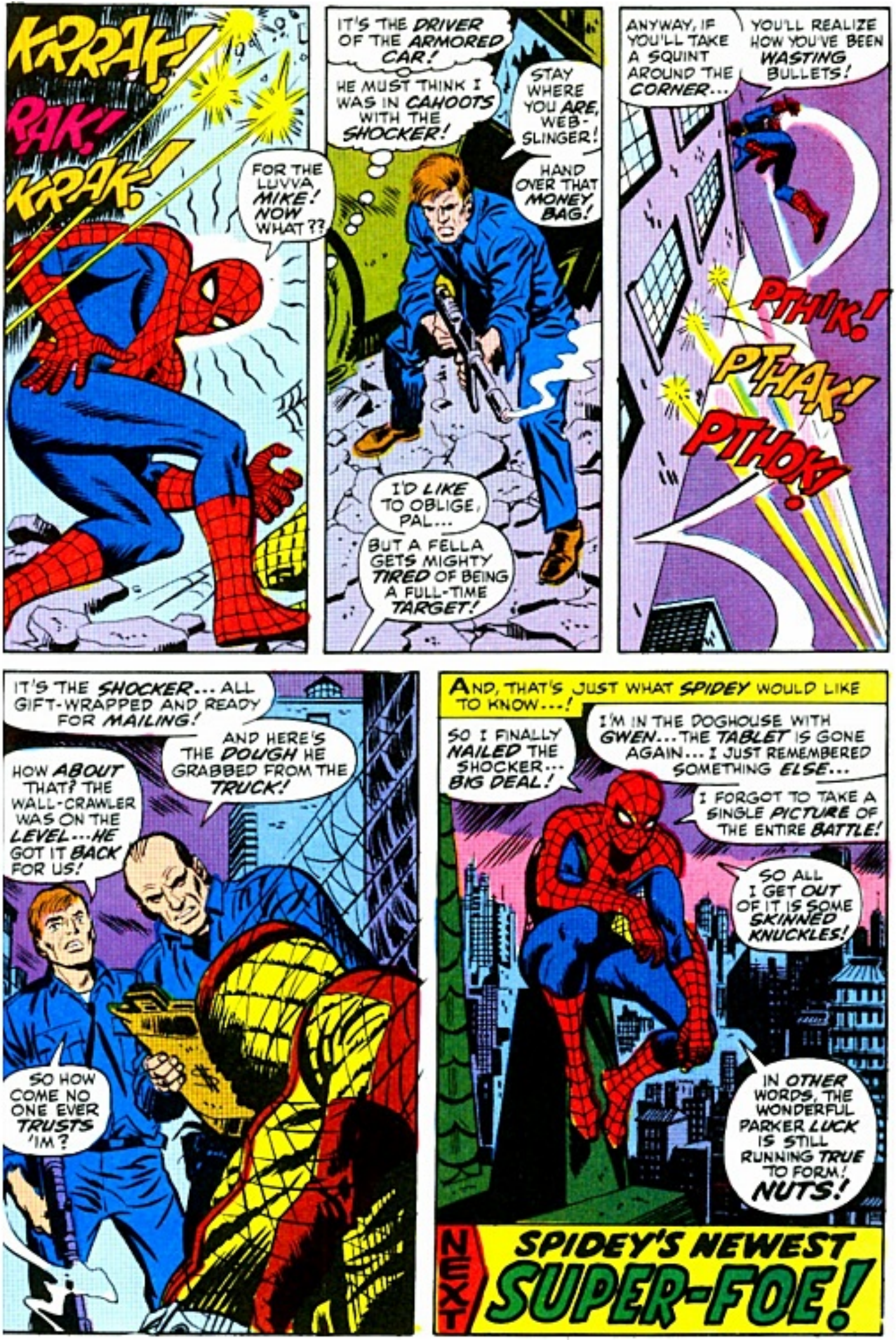

OKAY, SOAP OPERA TIME'S OVER NOW! SO HERE'S WHAT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR...!
HEY, MARTY... LOOK OUT!
WHAT IN BLAZES IS THAT?
I DUNNO... BUT LOOK AT THE HOLE IT JUST BLASTED IN FRONT OF US!
SKREEECHHH!
ZAK!
SPROING!
A SECOND BLAST!!
IT TORE THE ARMORED DOOR... RIGHT OFF ITS HINGES!!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THIS MONEY, GENTLEMEN!
I PROMISE YOU THAT THE SHOCKER WILL PUT IT TO VERY GOOD USE!
THE SHOCKER!! ...WE... SHOULDA GUESSED..!
I HATE TO SPOIL A GOOD THING FOR YOU, FELLA...
UNHHH!
BUT THIS KIND OF ENTRANCE APPEALS TO MY SENSE OF DRAMA!

I'LL SAY ONE THING FOR YOU, SHOCKIE...
YOU SURE CAN TAKE YOUR LUMPS!
UH OH! HIS COSTUME AUTOMATICALLY VIBRATED AGAIN WHEN I ZONKED HIM...
THAT CRUMMY VIBRATING POWER OF HIS MAKES HIM ONE TOUGH COOKIE TO BEAT!
ENABLING HIM TO SHRUG OFF THE BLOW ONCE MORE!
I LET YOU LIVE, THE LAST TIME WE MET! BUT, NOW--
I WON'T BE SO MERCIFUL!
LUCKY HE TELEGRAPHED THAT BLAST!
I WAS ABLE TO LEAP OVER IT!
ZAK!
BUT I CAN'T KEEP DODGING ALL OF THEM!
ZAK!
THAT ONE WAS TOO CLOSE!
THINK, SPIDEY... THINK!
PTASK!

OH NO! THE WHOLE WALL'S COMING DOWN ON ME!
BRRKACKK
ZAK!
IF I CAN SHOOT OUT MY WEBS FAST ENOUGH...
I'LL USE THEM TO DEFLECT THE BRICKS!
...AND TO CUSHION MY FALL!
BY THE TIME HE GETS OUT OF THERE...
IF HE EVER DOES...
I'LL BE JUST A MEMORY ...WITH MY WELL-EARNED LOOT!
DON'T BET ON IT, SWEETIE!
THWIIPP!
PTHWAPP!
NOW WHAT'S HE DOING?
I CAN FREE MYSELF INSTANTLY!
...BY VIBRO-SHOCKING YOUR WEBS LOOSE!
ZZZZZZZZZZZZ

NOW, TASTE A BLOW DELIVERED WITH VIBRO-SHOCK POWER...
POWER WHICH MAKES IT A DOZEN TIMES MORE POTENT THAN ANY NORMAL PUNCH!
NICE TRY, GUY!
BUT, SINCE I'M AT LEAST A DOZEN TIMES STRONGER THAN ANY NORMAL CUT-UP...
IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN THAT TO DOWN ME!
CAREFUL! WE DON'T WANNA HURT OUR TENDER LITTLE CLAWS NOW, DO WE?
HE'S FIGHTING MAD... REACHING UP AT ME AGAIN..!
NOW WASN'T THAT A SILLY THING TO DO?
THUPP!

ALL RIGHT, SPIDER-MAN!
YOU'VE TRIED TO MOCK ME FOR THE LAST TIME!
WADDAYA MEAN TRIED?
I THOUGHT I DID A PRETTY NEAT JOB OF IT!
HAVE TO MOVE FAST...
BEFORE HE ZAPS ANOTHER VIBRO-BLAST AT ME!
THERE, BIG MAN! YOU CAN'T HIT WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE!
MY FACE! ...COVERED WITH WEBBING!
KNOW SOMETHING? IT'S AN IMPROVE-MENT!
AND NOW... LET'S CUT THE KIDDING AROUND...!
BKOP!
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TOLD ME HOW YOUR VIBRO-POWER DEFLECTS MY BLOWS!
...YOU CONVINCED ME TO USE MY SUNDAY PUNCH!
AND HERE IT IS NOT EVEN THE WEEKEND! TSK! TSK!
OH, BY THE WAY... DON'T BOTHER TRYING TO VIBRATE YOURSELF LOOSE!
YOU'LL FIND IT AWFULLY FRUSTRATING...
...'SPECIALLY SINCE I COPPED YOUR WRIST POWER UNITS!
THEY'LL MAKE A SWINGIN' PAIR OF CUFF LINKS!


KRRAK!
RAK!
KRAK!
FOR THE LUVVA MIKE! NOW WHAT??
IT'S THE DRIVER OF THE ARMORED CAR!
HE MUST THINK I WAS IN CAHOOTS WITH THE SHOCKER!
STAY WHERE YOU ARE, WEB-SLINGER!
HAND OVER THAT MONEY BAG!
I'D LIKE TO OBLIGE, PAL...
BUT A FELLA GETS MIGHTY TIRED OF BEING A FULL-TIME TARGET!
ANYWAY, IF YOU'LL TAKE A SQUINT AROUND THE CORNER...
YOU'LL REALIZE HOW YOU'VE BEEN WASTING BULLETS!
PTHIK!
PTHAK!
PTHOK!
IT'S THE SHOCKER... ALL GIFT-WRAPPED AND READY FOR MAILING!
AND HERE'S THE DOUGH HE GRABBED FROM THE TRUCK!
HOW ABOUT THAT? THE WALL-CRAWLER WAS ON THE LEVEL... HE GOT IT BACK FOR US!
SO HOW COME NO ONE EVER TRUSTS 'IM?
AND, THAT'S JUST WHAT SPIDEY WOULD LIKE TO KNOW...!
SO I FINALLY NAILED THE SHOCKER... BIG DEAL!
I'M IN THE DOGHOUSE WITH GWEN... THE TABLET IS GONE AGAIN... I JUST REMEMBERED SOMETHING ELSE...
I FORGOT TO TAKE A SINGLE PICTURE OF THE ENTIRE BATTLE!
SO ALL I GET OUT OF IT IS SOME SKINNED KNUCKLES!
IN OTHER WORDS, THE WONDERFUL PARKER LUCK IS STILL RUNNING TRUE TO FORM! NUTS!
NEXT
SPIDEY'S NEWEST SUPER-FOE!

PART FOUR

MEANWHILE, BACK IN ASGARD...

WELCOME back. I've missed you. And now, while I hope you've enjoyed basking in the rekindled glory of Spidey's first and subsequent appearances, the time has come to change the mood.

Up till this point we've been studying three of Marvel's Earth-bound masterworks. Despite their somewhat startling superpowers, The Fantastic Four, The Hulk, and your friendly neighborhood web-slinger are all mortal human beings. But not so our next production.

Look at it this way: Suppose you had a newly created stable of superstars which consisted of a teenager who could burst into flame and fly through the air, a stretchable scientist with skin like Silly Putty, his ofttimes invisible lady love, and a multimuscled misfit with lumpy orange skin—to say nothing of a wall-crawling *Wunderkind* and a jolly green giant—what in the name of comicdom assembled would you do for an encore? Sure, we were always striving for variety, but now it was getting ridiculous.

Not that anyone was forcing us to launch new titles. Someone else might have been content to declare a moratorium on any new gambles and simply stay with the characters we had. But I was like a crapshooter rolling one great pass after another—you just don't stop when you're on a winning streak. And besides, we were now averaging more than a thousand letters a week from frantic Marvelites everywhere demanding more, more, more! All of us in the bullpen were carried along by an ever-mounting wave of excitement and enthusiasm, not to mention a healthy helping of greed.

But what was left to invent? Who could be stronger than The Hulk? Who could be smarter than Mr. Fantastic? We already had a kid who could fly, one who could walk on walls and ceilings, and a female who could fade away whenever danger threatened—or whenever the artist ran out of ink. As you can see, we were hooked on superlatives at that time, always trying to come up with characters

who were bigger, better, stronger. However, we had painted ourselves into a corner. The only one who could top the heroes we already had would be Super-God, but I didn't think the world was quite ready for that concept just yet. So, it was back to the ol' drawing board.

I must have gone through a dozen pencils and a thousand sheets of paper in the days that followed, making notes and sketches, listing names and titles, and jotting down every type of superpower I could think of. But I kept coming back to the same ludicrous idea: the only way to top the others would be with Super-God.

I tried to shake the thought, to get it out of my mind once and for all. There was no way we could present a strip featuring God without possibly offending any reader of almost any religious affiliation. Remember, this was before the days of the so-called underground comics where anything goes. But even that wouldn't have mattered. The underground type of publication wasn't our thing. Marvel has always aimed for a family audience—fun for the kiddies and fantasy for the older readers. Or the other way around if you prefer. So I knew we just couldn't swing with Super-God.

Or could we? A thought suddenly struck me. During a recent radio interview the talk-show host and I had been discussing our Marvel stories and he had referred to them as a twentieth-century mythology. It was his feeling that we were creating an entire contemporary mythos, a family of legends that might be handed down to future generations just as those we had read as children had been handed down to us. One of the points he had made was that Marvel's heroes had some of the charisma, some of the flavor of ancient fairy tales, of ancient Greek and Norse mythology. And that was what grabbed me. That was the answer.

I couldn't—I wouldn't—do a series featuring God as a comic-book hero. But I could—and would—do a series featuring *a* god as a comic-book hero. After all, ever since man has walked the Earth there have been legends of gods and their goddesses, their problems, their battles, their triumphs, and their defeats. Okay. Since we were the legend makers of today, we'd simply take what had gone before, build on it, embellish it, and come up with our own version of the continuing saga of good versus evil—god-wise, that is.

As far as I can remember, Norse mythology always turned me on. There was something about those mighty, horn-helmeted Vikings and their tales of Valhalla, of Ragnarok, of the Aesir, the Fire

Demons, and immortal, eternal Asgard, home of the gods. If ever there was a rich lode of material into which Marvel might dip, it was there—and we would mine it.

But now, for the first time, I was faced with a frustrating problem. Heretofore, I had written all of the origin tales of each new character, as well as the subsequent follow-up stories in every series. But now it was impossible. I simply wouldn't have the time to continue with The Fantastic Four, The Hulk, Spider-Man, and the other odd Western, mystery, romance, humor, and assorted monster tales I was writing and still do justice to our newest feature yet a'borning. Of course, I could have given up some of the other, less important strips, but a new problem was now beginning to disturb me. I realized that I had been writing the bulk of our first-line material with no back-up writers, and that created a dangerous situation. What if I were to become incapacitated in some way? Producing monthly publications, we had grueling, man-killing production schedules to maintain. It was simply too risky for me not to be grooming some other writers to fill the breach if necessary. Besides, it's no fun being a boss if there's no one to yell at.

Luckily, I had someone to yell at. The time is come to draw the curtain and reveal another Marvel madman who hath thus far patiently been standing in the wings. So let's hear it, gang, for Lucky Larry Lieber, artist, writer, and natural-born kid brother. Yes, one of the worst-kept secrets of the comic-book biz is the fact that Larry Lieber is related to me by virtue of having been born to the same parents as yours truly—albeit nine years later.

At this juncture it may possibly behoove us to pause for a moment since I'm well aware that the drama and suspense are growing virtually unendurable. As we take our well-deserved break, I'll furnish a couple of explanations to questions that may be puzzling you, questions which you're too polite to ask. First of all, I really don't call him Lucky, just as I don't call the other two fellas Jolly or Sturdy. To some this may seem a trivial point, but if ever you run into Larry, or to Jack or Steve, I know you'd want to address them properly. Secondly, there may be some among you who are, even now, furrowing your brows, narrowing your eyes, and thinking—with the deep-down sharpness that is ever the mark of the true Marvelite—"How come Stan Lee's kid brother is named Lieber? Why did Larry change his name?" Ah, but t'was not Lieber the Younger who did alter his name.

Nay, t'was he who pens these imperishable words who has gone from Lieber to Lee. And, as Richard Milhous himself now knows, every explanation seems to require an additional exposition; so let me embellish this theme just a few minutes more.

Myself when born was christened Stanley Martin Lieber—truly an appellation to conjure with. It had a rhythm, a vitality, a lyricism all its own. I still remember one of my earliest purchases being a little rubber stamp with my name on it, which I promptly stamped on every book and paper I owned—and even on some I didn't. So happy was I being S.M.L., and so certain that I would one day write the great American novel, or the great American motion picture, and so young and witless was I at the time I started writing comics, that I felt I couldn't sully so proud a name on books for little kiddies. That's why seventeen-year-old Stanley Martin Lieber felt he needed a simpler sobriquet, and that's why he divided his first name into two syllables, making each syllable a name of its own. Stan Lee was for comic books. S.M.L. would be held in reserve—for greater things. Let me point out, parenthetically, that S.M.L. is still being held in reserve, and this very book, which is obviously holding you spellbound, is possibly the closest I'll come to writing that great American novel. Anyway, just to wrap it up before it gets too sticky, I legally changed my name to Stan Lee a few years ago, so S.M.L. is nothing more than a cherished memory—a slowly fading dream on the melancholy mattress of life.

Now then, where were we? Ah yes—I needed someone to write the new feature, which hopefully would be Marvel's fourth winner in our little superhero sweepstakes. Slowly surveying our entire, vast writing staff—which mainly consisted of myself and any occasional freelancer who happened to wander in to make a free phone call—my piercing, penetrating gaze happened to fall upon a skinny kid who was sitting at a drawing board putting the finishing touches to a monster story he had just drawn and delivered. With unequaled perception, honed by long years of study and observation, I soon realized I was looking at Larry Lieber—and I remembered that he had many times expressed a desire to write a superhero story if ever the opportunity arose. Are you beginning to see how Destiny herself must have conspired to assemble all of these isolated elements into just the right pattern, at just the right time for the sake of generations yet unborn?

Historians of the future will wish to note that Larry Lieber ac-

quiesced when asked if he'd pen a new superhero strip for the greater glory of Marveldom. Let the record also show that Jack Kirby did likewise when offered the illustrating chore. So I had my team. I had my theme, my subject matter. The stars were in ascension. The month had no Rs in it. Nothing could go wrong. There were just two elements lacking: a hero . . . and a plot.

Let's start with the superhero. As all true devotees know, every superhero needs a special quality, a special weapon of some sort. I had already decided that our hero would be one of the Norse gods, which should be quality enough. But . . . his weapon. A high-flying deity would hardly employ a Sherman tank, or brass knuckles, or a BB gun. It would have to be something different, something unique. Then, another thought hit me. I wanted him to be able to fly. I wanted him to be able to zip around the sky and make the trip between heaven and Earth without waiting for Pan Am. The Hulk simulated flight by leaping into the air; the Human Torch did it by bursting into flame; Spidey had his webbing and swung around like Tarzan. God only knows how Superman manages it—I never figured that out. I didn't want to merely say, "There goes our hero, flying off again." I wanted it to be somehow believable. And then I realized I could solve both problems at once—with a hammer!

No need to go into all the sordid details now. If you're a long time Thor buff you know all about it. If not, you'll find out as soon as you read the strip that follows. Suffice it to say that it suddenly all came together when I figured that Thor, God of Thunder, would be perfect for the job. I liked the sound of his name. It was short, simple, easy to remember, and if you lisped nobody would know.

But then there was the problem of empathy. I realized that it wouldn't be the easiest job in the world to make a reader in Hoboken develop an affinity for some long-haired nut in blue tights and helmet wings who also happens to be a Norse Thunder God. Still, one formula that's always worked in comics is the gimmick of the secret-identity hero. Also, thought I, this particular strip will be offbeat enough to allow me to employ one of the oldest clichés in the book: frail and feeble Dr. Donald Blake is in reality the most invincible immortal of them all—the mighty Thor. I wanted Blake to be a surgeon because of the dramatic possibilities it would later present. I could envision themes where Thor is needed in Asgard but Dr. Blake is needed on Earth to perform a critical operation (which none but

he can perform, natch). Oh, the suspense, the tension, the choice that must be made. Besides, he could spend his spare time romping about with some ravishing registered nurse when the occasion demanded, or even when it didn't. Yep, I was convinced. Donald Blake would be a doctor, thin, lame, defenseless—the exact antithesis of his awesome Asgardian alter ego.

Within minutes I rushed to the typewriter and pounded out a synopsis for Larry. Even though I wouldn't be writing the script, I always tried to ensure that the basic concepts would be mine. Of course Larry put in a lot of his own distinctive touches. One that I'll never forget was his saying that Thor had an Uru hammer. When I read that I figured the kid had done a lot of research and unearthed the name of some ancient metal. I was proud of him. It wasn't till we were discussing it years later that he casually mentioned that he'd just made the name up. He liked the sound of it. Well, I have to admit that an Uru hammer sounds a lot more impressive than a plain, ordinary carpenter's hammer. I'm still proud of him.

As for Jolly Jack, he had done his usual sensational job. He made the Thunder God look just like a God of Thunder should. It took a lot of courage, too. You've got to remember that Thor had long blond hair before it became fashionable among us mere mortals—before the Beatles had made the scene. Had anyone but Jack Kirby been the artist, it's barely possible that the ol' hammer thrower's masculinity might have been in question. But we managed to carry it off. Despite his cute little Uru hammer, his long curly locks, his name which sounded as though the person calling him was tongue-tied, he made the grade. The mighty Thor joined mighty Marvel's mighty family of mighty superheroes. And once again we'd hit the jackpot. Apparently all of comic-book fandom had been breathlessly waiting for such a publication. Goldilocks broke as many sales records as The Fantastic Four, The Hulk, and Spider-Man had done before him.

But don't go 'way yet. There's more. Before you read the origin story which follows this unforgettable exposition I've got to tell you what happened after Thor was finally launched. Larry, after writing it and a number of other features, decided to concentrate on his artwork and forgo his scripting activities. So who ended up writing the Thunder God's adventures after all? How'd you guess?

Now this is what I really want to tell you. The Thor that you'll meet in the origin story which you're beginning to think you'll never

get to is really not quite the same as the Thor which developed later. When I began to write the strip, which means actually putting the words in all their little pink mouths, I decided that I wanted the hammer holder to speak more like a god. And everyone knows that gods all speak with biblical and Shakespearean phraseology. So I slowly and deliberately changed the entire style of the strip, filling it with "thou shalts" and "thou shalt nots" and "so be its" and "get thee gones" and like that. I've always been a nut about the poetic flavor of the Bible and the sentence structure and lilt of Elizabethan writing, and this was my chance to play with it. The reason I mention it now is because I want to compliment you. Most everyone told me that no superhero strip could succeed if the writing were too archaic, or too stylized, or too lyrical. Well, Thor is still one of Marvel's top sellers, after all these years, and that means that you're a lot smarter and more literary than people gave you credit for. So congratulations!

Congratulations also on the fact that you've managed to wade through all these words and pages and you've finally made it to the fourth plateau. Thus, without any further ado, we open the floodgates of reading enjoyment and unleash upon you the origin of the mighty Thor.

IND.
12¢
JOURNEY INTO
MYSTERY
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MC
83
AUG.
INTRODUCING... THE MIGHTY THOR!
THE MOST EXCITING SUPER-HERO OF ALL TIME!!
BEGIN THE SAGA OF THOR IN THIS ISSUE!

THOR THE MIGHTY!

and "THE STONE MEN from SATURN!"

THE LEGEND HAS COME TRUE! BY THE WILL OF THE GODS, I AM ***ALIVE!*** I AM ***INVINCIBLE!*** I AM--***THOR!!!***

OUR STORY OPENS ON THE WINDY COAST OF NORWAY, WHERE WE SEE A FRAIL FIGURE SILHOUETTED AGAINST THE BLEAK SKY! HE IS DR. DON BLAKE, AN AMERICAN VACATIONING IN EUROPE!

AND, AS DOCTOR BLAKE TURNS AND LEAVES THE SITE, HE DOESN'T SEE THE STRANGE ALIEN SPACE-SHIP WHICH SILENTLY LANDS BEHIND HIM!

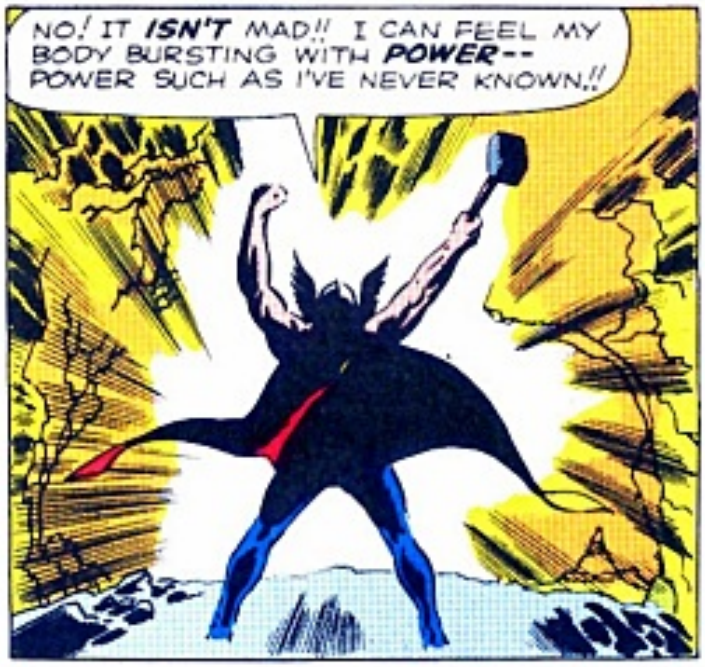
TWO PRINCIPALS IN A GRIM PAGEANT ... NEITHER ONE NOTICING THE OTHER! BUT HOW DIFFERENT WOULD THINGS BE IF THEY WERE TO MEET AT THIS MOMENT! HOW DIFFERENT WOULD BE THE FUTURE OF ALL MANKIND!
BUT OURS IS A DRAMA DECREED BY THE FATES TO BE ACTED OUT! NOTHING CAN STOP IT! NOTHING CAN CHANGE IT! WATCH AND SEE...
AH! AT LAST WE ARE ON EARTH!
THIS ATMOSPHERE--IT IS SO DIFFERENT FROM OUR OWN PLANET!
THAT IS TO OUR ADVANTAGE! ON SATURN, WE ARE MIGHTY BEINGS! BUT HERE, IN THIS OXYGEN ATMOSPHERE, OUR STRENGTH IS EVEN GREATER!
BEHOLD HOW EASILY I LIFT THIS PLANT-THING OUT OF THE GROUND!
HAH! WELL DONE, GORR!
NOW WATCH, AS I PROVE THE INVULNERABILITY OF OUR STONE BODIES!
WITHOUT THE SLIGHTEST HESITATION, I JUMP...
...FOR I KNOW THAT NOTHING ON THIS PUNY EARTH...
...CAN HARM ME!
BUT, ONE PAIR OF EYES DOES SEE THE AWESOME ALIENS! THE EYES OF AN AGED FISHERMAN!
BY THE BEARD OF ODIN, WHAT HAVE I STUMBLED ONTO?!!
AND IF OUR STRENGTH WERE NOT ENOUGH, WE COULD RELY UPON OUR WEAPONS!
IT WILL BE CHILD'S PLAY TO CONQUER THIS PLANET WHEN OUR MAIN INVASION FORCE ARRIVES!

I MUST RUN TO THE VILLAGE AND SOUND THE ALARM!!
BUT, WHEN THE OLD FISHERMAN TELLS HIS STORY...
STONE CREATURES FROM OUTER SPACE? WHAT NONSENSE DO YOU SPEAK?!!
BEGONE, OLD MAN! DO NOT WASTE OUR TIME WITH FAIRY TALES!
IT SOUNDS FANTASTIC! AND YET, THE MAN DOESN'T APPEAR MAD! I WONDER...?
THE FOLLOWING DAY, DR. DON BLAKE DECIDES TO EXPLORE THE COASTAL AREA DESCRIBED BY THE FISHERMAN...
SO FAR I'VE SEEN NO SIGN--WAIT--WHAT'S THIS? FOOTPRINTS!! THEY LEAD AROUND THE BEND!
IT'S THEM--THE ALIENS!! THEY'RE JUST AS HE SAID THEY WERE-- MEN OF STONE!
REMEMBER... DEATH TO ANY WHO DISCOVER OUR PRESENCE!
IF THEY FIND ME HERE, THEY'LL KILL ME! I'D BETTER LEAVE WHILE--BLAST IT, I STEPPED ON A TWIG!
LO! AN EARTHLING! HE HAS SEEN US!!
AFTER HIM! DO NOT LET HIM ESCAPE!
SNAP!
I--I CAN'T RUN FAST ENOUGH! THEY'LL SOON CATCH UP TO ME!
OOH!! I TRIPPED...
I'M HELPLESS WITHOUT MY CANE--WAIT! PERHAPS I CAN HIDE IN THOSE CAVES--
MADE IT! BUT THEY'RE BOUND TO FIND ME SOON! IF ONLY THERE WERE A WAY OUT--!
BACK THERE! THERE IS ANOTHER EXIT!

...BUT IT'S BLOCKED BY THIS BOULDER! UHHH--IT'S HOPELESS! I CAN'T BUDGE IT AT ALL!
THE CAVE IS SO DANK--SO GLOOMY--AND AIRLESS! IT SEEMS NO HUMAN HAS SET FOOT IN HERE FOR AGES!! SIGH- I MIGHT AS WELL WAIT FOR THE STONE MEN TO FIND ME--I-I'M TRAPPED!
BUT, SUDDENLY...
THE WALL IS OPENING!! I MUST HAVE PRESSED SOME KIND OF HIDDEN LEVER WHEN I LEANED AGAINST IT!
IT'S A SECRET CHAMBER! BUT THERE'S NOTHING INSIDE... EXCEPT THAT GNARLED WOODEN STICK--LIKE AN ANCIENT CANE!
I WONDER? PERHAPS BY USING THIS AS A LEVER, I CAN MOVE THE BOULDER!
UHHH... I... I STILL CAN'T BUDGE IT! BUT I MUST KEEP TRYING... MUSTN'T GIVE UP... IT'S MY ONLY CHANCE TO ESCAPE!
NO! IT--IT'S HOPELESS! EVEN A BULL DOZER COULDN'T MOVE THAT GIANT ROCK!
IN HELPLESS ANGER, DON BLAKE STRIKES THE USELESS CANE AGAINST THE IMMOVABLE BOULDER, AND, AS HE DOES SO...
WHA--?!!

THE CAVE IS BATHED IN BLINDING LIGHT!! LIKE A FIERY BOLT OF LIGHTNING! AND THE ANCIENT CANE--IT--IT'S CHANGING SHAPE!

AND--I'M CHANGING TOO!!
CAN THIS BE REALLY HAPPENING --OR AM I GOING MAD?!!


NO! IT ISN'T MAD!! I CAN FEEL MY BODY BURSTING WITH POWER-- POWER SUCH AS I'VE NEVER KNOWN!!

THE CANE!! IT HAS BECOME A MIGHTY HAMMER!! AND I HAVE BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO--INTO--WAIT! THERE ARE WORDS INSCRIBED ON THE HAMMER!!

"WHOSOEVER HOLDS THIS HAMMER, IF HE BE WORTHY, SHALL POSSESS THE POWER OF.. THOR"

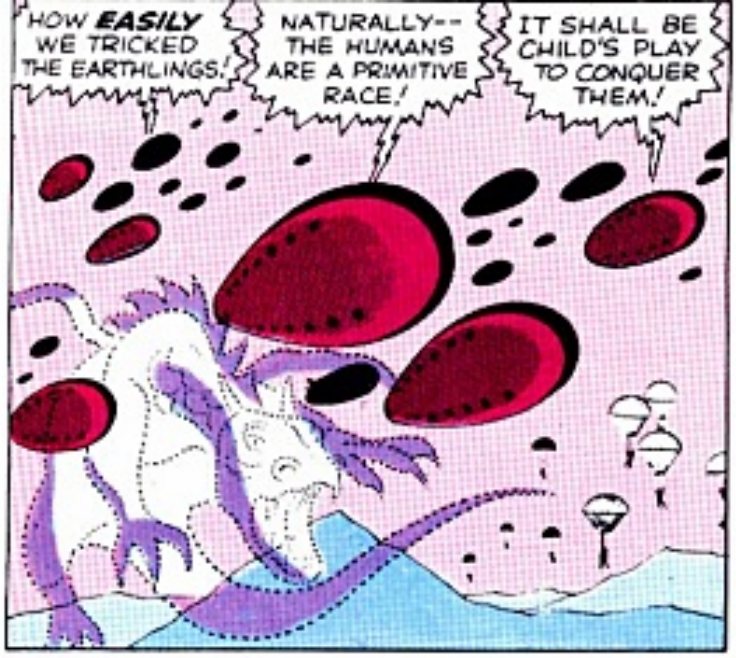
THOR!! THE LEGENDARY GOD OF THUNDER!! THE MIGHTIEST WARRIOR OF ALL MYTHOLOGY!! THIS IS HIS HAMMER!! AND I--I AM THOR!!!

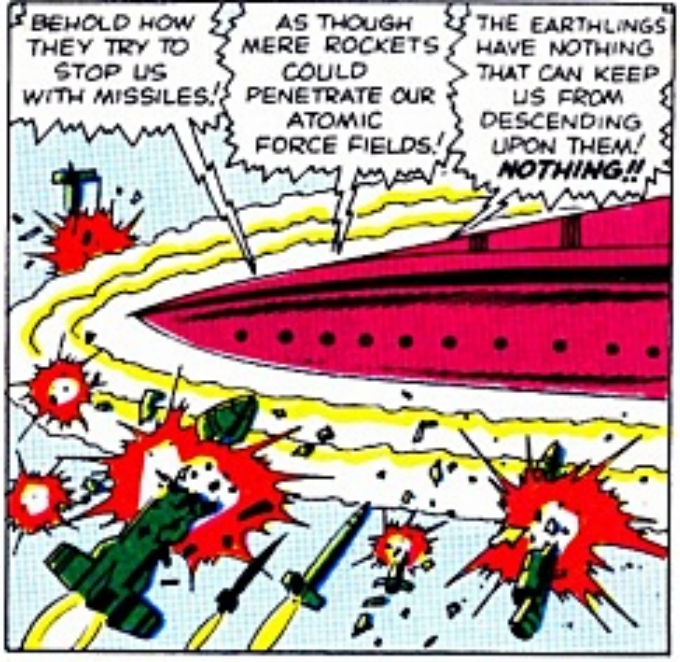
A FEW MOMENTS AGO, I COULDN'T EVEN BUDGE THIS BOULDER!
BUT NOW...
PART 2
"the POWER of THOR!
I CAN LIFT IT AS IF IT WERE CARDBOARD!

THE STONE CREATURES WILL NEVER SUSPECT THAT THEIR FRAIL QUARRY ESCAPED THROUGH THIS REAR EXIT!
BUT WHAT HAPPENS NOW? DO I WALK AMIDST THE CIVILIZED WORLD AS A-MYTHOLOGICAL GOD?? OR--? IT IS TOO BEWILDERING! I MUST PAUSE... AND THINK THIS OUT!
THOR... THE GOD OF THUNDER! WHAT DO I REMEMBER OF HIM FROM MY SCHOOL DAYS? HE WAS THE NOBLEST AND STRONGEST OF ALL THE NORSE GODS!
THE FOURTH DAY OF THE WEEK, THURSDAY WAS NAMED IN HIS HONOR! HE WAS--WHA--? WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?? I'M -- I'M CHANGING AGAIN!!
I'M BACK TO NORMAL ONCE MORE! BUT HOW?? WHAT CAUSED IT?? WAIT-- THE INSCRIPTION ON THE HAMMER--
"WHOSOEVER HOLDS THIS HAMMER, IF HE BE WORTHY, SHALL POSSESS THE POWER OF THOR!"
SO THAT'S IT! I MUST CONTINUALLY HOLD THE HAMMER TO RETAIN THOR'S STRENGTH!
IF I LET GO OF IT, IN ABOUT SIXTY SECONDS I REVERT BACK TO MY NORMAL SELF!
ACCORDING TO THE LEGEND, THOR'S HAMMER HAD OTHER CHARACTERISTICS! ONE, IS THAT IT WAS SO HEAVY, NONE BUT MIGHTY THOR COULD LIFT IT!

THE LEGENDS ALSO SAY THAT THE HAMMER IS ENCHANTED! WHENEVER THOR HURLS IT FROM HIM...
...IT MUST RETURN!
ALSO, THE HAMMER IS INVINCIBLE!
NOTHING CAN RESIST IT!
CRASH
NOTHING!!
HIS BLOOD BOILING WITH EXCITEMENT, THE TRANSFORMED DOCTOR CONTINUES TO EXPERIMENT WITH HIS MYSTIC WEAPON...
BY STAMPING THE HANDLE TWICE ON THE GROUND...
THUMP
THUMP
...I CAN CREATE RAIN OR SNOW...
...WHICH SOON GROW INTO A RAGING TORNADO! ALL THE POWER OF THE STORM IS THOR'S TO COMMAND!
BOOM!

THEN, TO END THE STORM, I MERELY STAMP THIS HANDLE THREE TIMES ON THE GROUND!!!
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
BUT, IF I SHOULD STAMP IT BUT ONCE...
THE HAMMER CHANGES BACK INTO A CANE... AND I ONCE AGAIN BECOME DR. DON BLAKE!
TO THINK, THE MOST INCREDIBLE POWER OF ALL TIME HAS BEEN HIDDEN IN THAT CAVE, WAITING TO BE FOUND!! BUT... I'VE WASTED ENOUGH TIME! THE WORLD MUST BE WARNED OF THE PRESENCE OF THE STONE MEN!
BUT EVEN AT THAT MOMENT, ON A NATO AIR BASE...
IT'S A FLEET OF UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS!
ALERT ALL MILITARY UNITS--AND SCRAMBLE THE JETS!
THE HUMANS HAVE SENT UP ARMED AIRCRAFT!
WE SHALL SOON DISPOSE OF THEM! SET UP THE MONSTER-IMAGE!
A MOMENT LATER, A HUGE, THREE-DIMENSIONAL PICTURE FLASHES ACROSS THE SKY!
WHA--? WHAT IN THE NAME OF HEAVEN IS IT??
IT'S HEADING RIGHT FOR US! WE CAN'T BANK IN TIME!!
BAIL OUT!!
HIT THE SILK!!

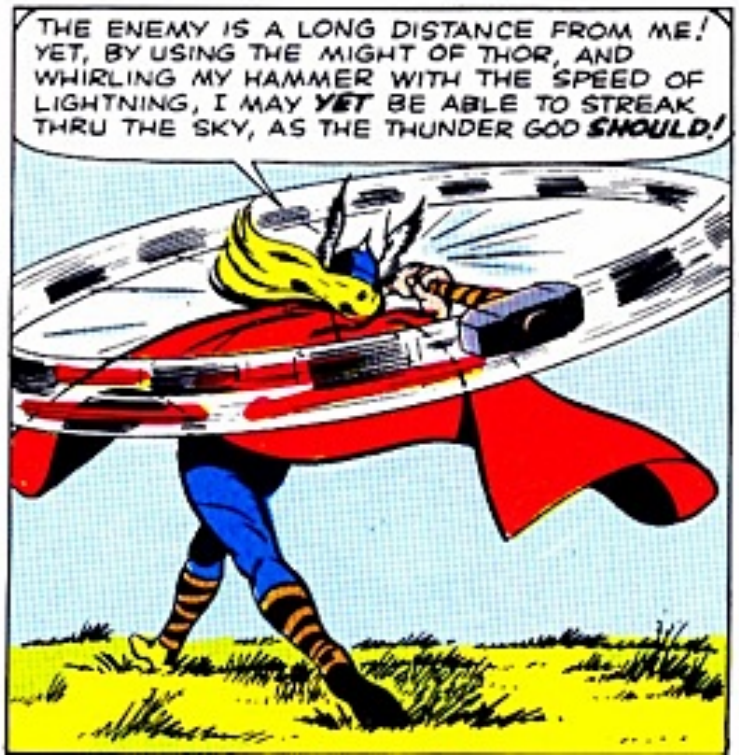

HOW EASILY WE TRICKED THE EARTHLINGS!
NATURALLY-- THE HUMANS ARE A PRIMITIVE RACE!
IT SHALL BE CHILD'S PLAY TO CONQUER THEM!


BEHOLD HOW THEY TRY TO STOP US WITH MISSILES!
AS THOUGH MERE ROCKETS COULD PENETRATE OUR ATOMIC FORCE FIELDS!
THE EARTHLINGS HAVE NOTHING THAT CAN KEEP US FROM DESCENDING UPON THEM! NOTHING!!

EARTH'S WEAPONS ARE USELESS AGAINST THE INVADERS! BUT, PERHAPS WHAT TWENTIETH CENTURY SCIENCE CAN'T DO...
THUMP

...THE GOD OF THUNDER CAN!!

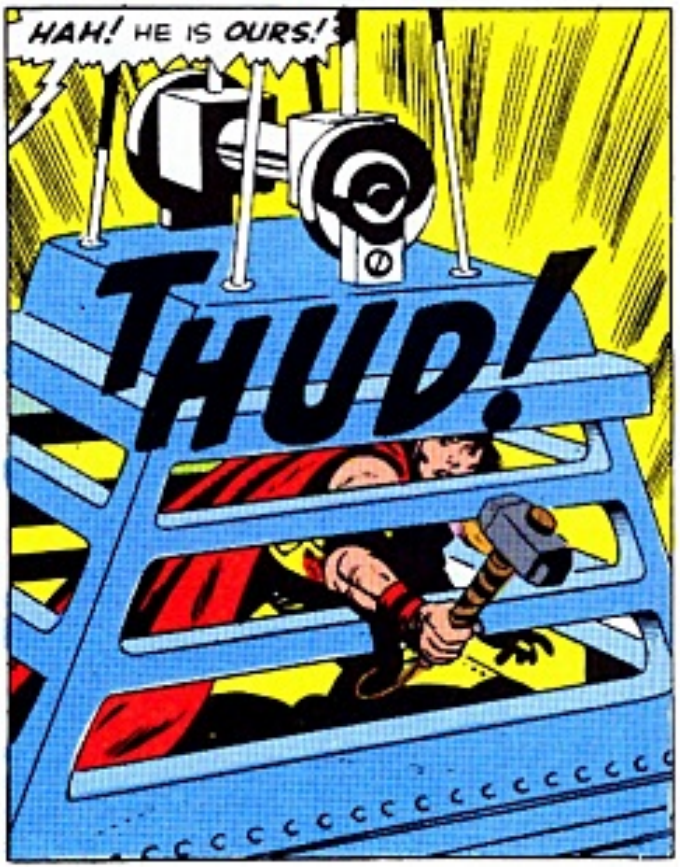
STRANGE--A MOMENT AGO THE SKY WAS CLEAR! YET NOW THERE IS A STORM BREWING!
HOW CAN THIS BE? ...OUR WEATHER INSTRUMENTS DID NOT FORECAST IT!


THE ENEMY IS A LONG DISTANCE FROM ME! YET, BY USING THE MIGHT OF THOR, AND WHIRLING MY HAMMER WITH THE SPEED OF LIGHTNING, I MAY YET BE ABLE TO STREAK THRU THE SKY, AS THE THUNDER GOD SHOULD!

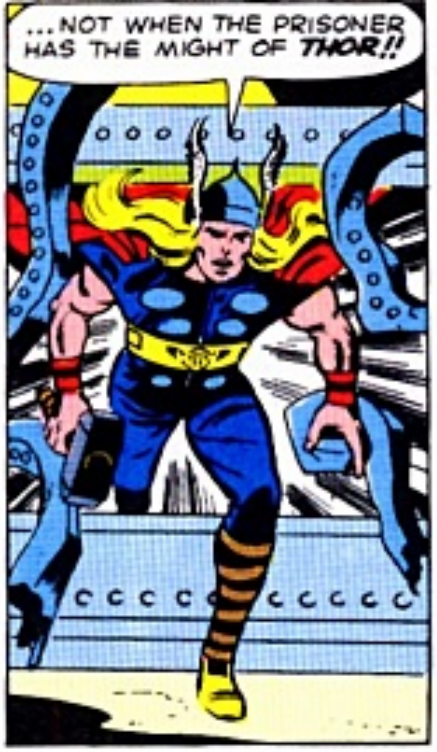
THERE! I RELEASE MY WHIRLING HAMMER FOR A SPLIT-SECOND, CATCHING THE UNBREAKABLE THONG, AND THEN--I AM PULLED ALONG AFTER IT LIKE THE TAIL OF A ROCKET!!

PART 3

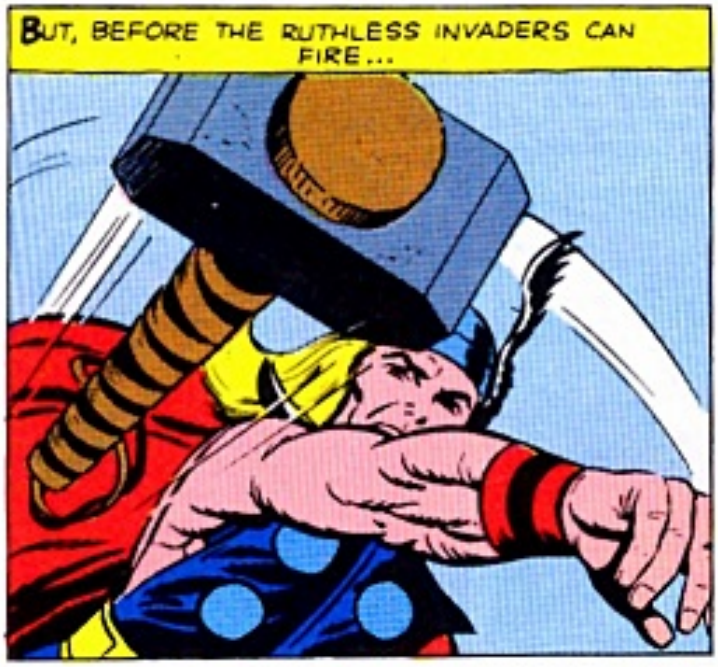
THOR THE MIGHTY STRIKES BACK!



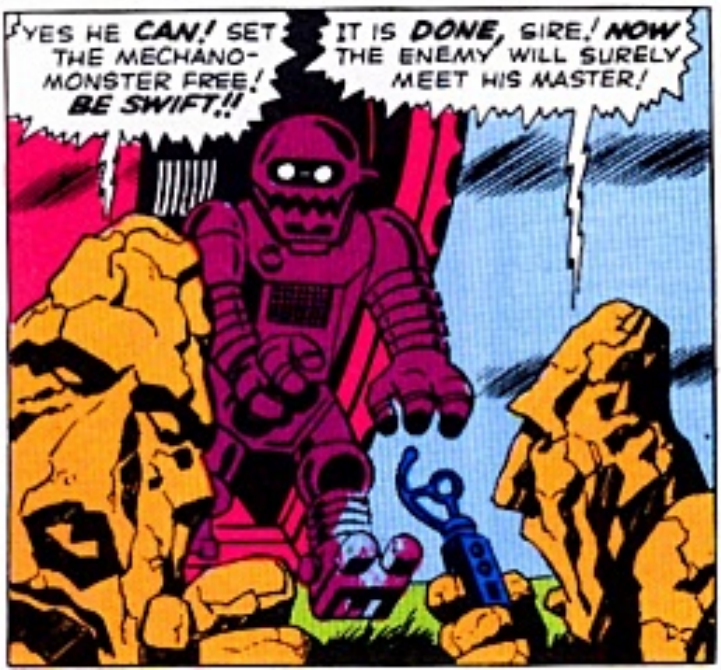
THE EARTHLING IS POWERLESS...
NO! OBSERVE...
IT IS IMPOSSIBLE!
IRON BARS DO NOT A PRISON MAKE!

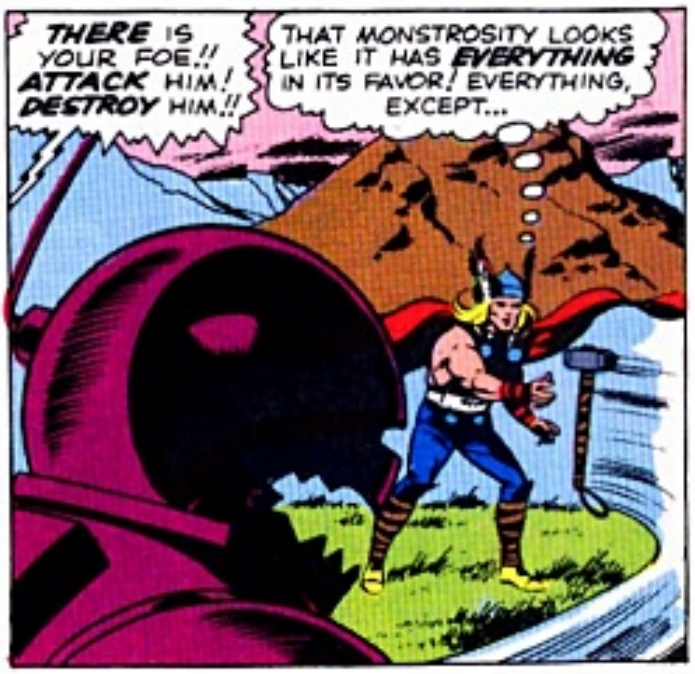

...NOT WHEN THE PRISONER HAS THE MIGHT OF THOR!!

THE EARTHLING IS TOO POWERFUL TO BE CAPTURED ALIVE!
HE MUST BE SLAIN! PREPARE TO DISINTEGRATE HIM!


BUT, BEFORE THE RUTHLESS INVADERS CAN FIRE...

OUR WEAPONS!!
THE EARTHLING CANNOT BE STOPPED!


YES HE CAN! SET THE MECHANO-MONSTER FREE! BE SWIFT!!
IT IS DONE, SIRE! NOW THE ENEMY WILL SURELY MEET HIS MASTER!


THERE IS YOUR FOE!! ATTACK HIM! DESTROY HIM!!
THAT MONSTROSITY LOOKS LIKE IT HAS EVERYTHING IN ITS FAVOR! EVERYTHING, EXCEPT...

...THE HAMMER OF THOR!
CLANG!
HE HAS VANQUISHED THE MECHANO-MONSTER!
THE HUMAN IS TOO MIGHTY --TOO SKILLED IN THE ART OF BATTLE!
AND WE KNOW NOT HOW MANY MORE THERE ARE LIKE HIM ON EARTH!

BACK!! BACK TO THE SHIPS AT ONCE!! WE MUST FLEE THIS ACCURSED PLANET!!

I'VE BEATEN THEM! I HAVE PROVEN THAT THE POWER OF THE HAMMER AND THE MIGHT OF THE THUNDER-GOD ARE INVINCIBLE! NOTHING CAN CONQUER THOR! NOTHING!!

HERE COMES THE INFANTRY! IF I REMAIN HERE, THEY'LL QUESTION ME!! THEY WON'T REST TILL THEY'VE LEARNED MY SECRET! I'LL BECOME AN INTERNATIONAL CURIOSITY!
BUT, ALL THAT CAN BE AVOIDED BY ONE GESTURE...
THUMP

LOOK! THE INVADERS ARE FLYING AWAY!
BUT WHY?? WHAT COULD HAVE DRIVEN THEM OFF??
I DON'T KNOW! THERE'S NO ONE IN SIGHT...
NAT

...EXCEPT THAT LAME PASSER-BY, WITH A GNARLED OLD CANE!
WELL, IT'S A CINCH THAT SKINNY GENT ISN'T EARTH'S SECRET WEAPON!
THE MENACE IS ENDED! NOW, IT'S TIME FOR ME TO GO BACK TO THE STATES... TAKING WITH ME THE GREATEST POWER EVER KNOWN TO MORTAL MAN!
THE END

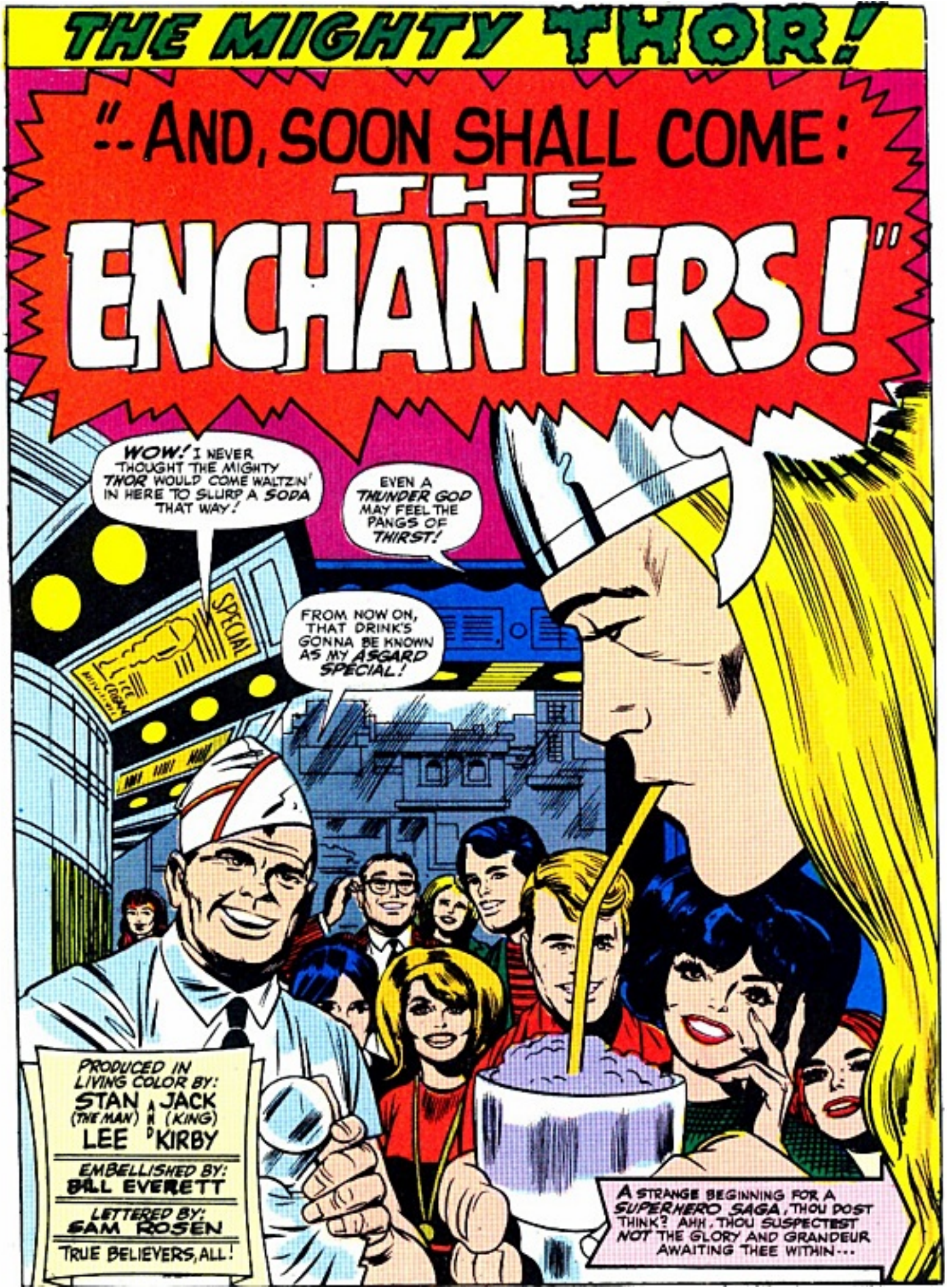
EDITOR'S NOTE:
THORR THE MIGHTY, THE GREATEST NEW SUPER-HERO OF ALL TIME, WILL APPEAR REGULARLY IN JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY!
RESERVE NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE AT YOUR NEWSDEALER NOW! IT'S SURE TO BE A SELL-OUT!

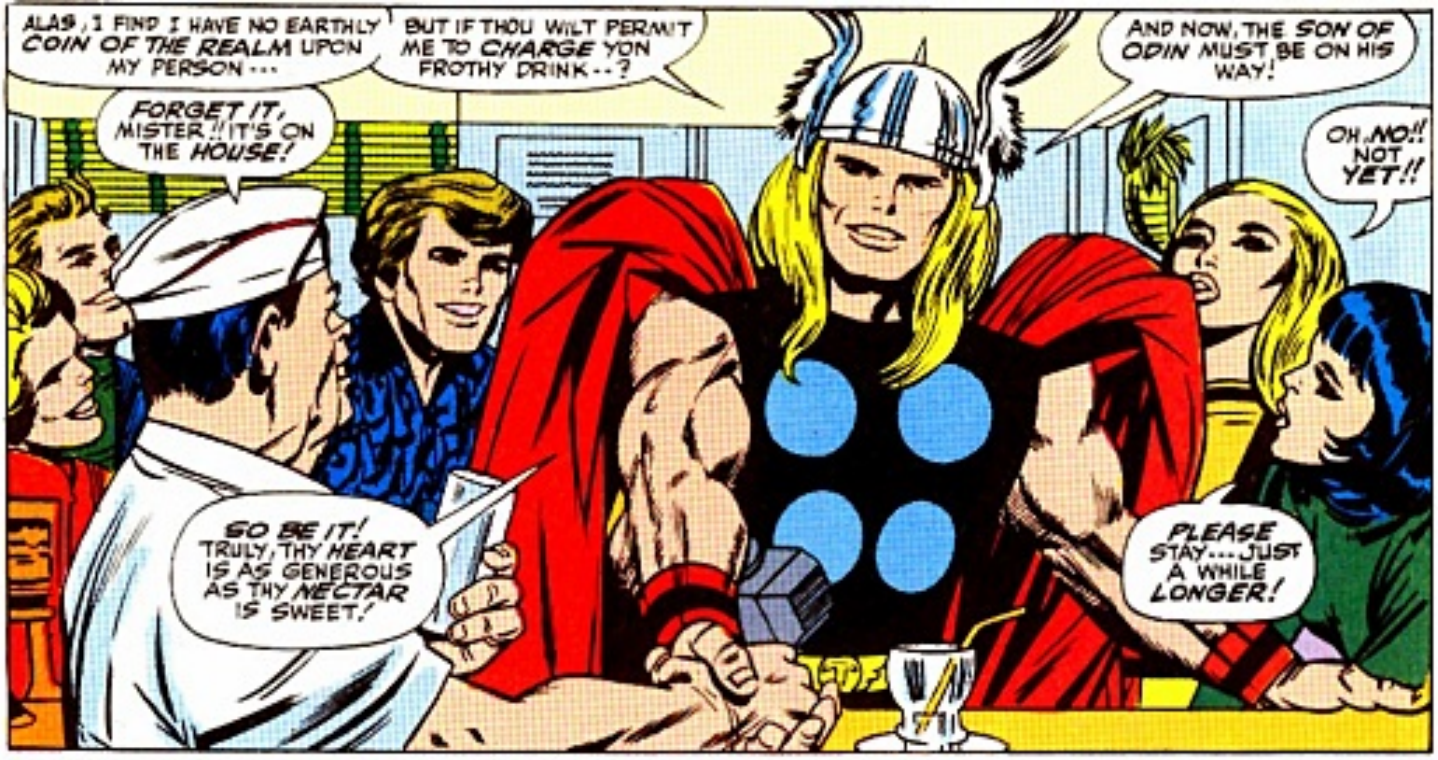
This time we'll segue to the year 1967. The Thunder God's been around for the past five years and Jack Kirby's still drawing the series. But shortly after the origin tale, yours truly took up the scripting chores and Thor became the first regularly published superhero to speak in a consistently archaic manner. Call it a biblical style—call it neo-Shakespearean—I call it the most fun I could have without laughing as I continually stumbled over the proper usages of "thou" and "thee" and "hast" and "hath" and all the other agonizing Asgardian forms of speech which I so dearly love and so dreadfully confuse.

I think, in the strip that follows, you'll notice a new feeling of power and pageantry that was merely hinted at in the origin tale. Since the character of ol' Goldilocks must necessarily be larger than life, it seemed only fitting that the scripting and the artwork likewise be larger than life—or at any rate appear to give that illusion.

You'll also notice how much more attention we began to give to Asgard, and to its legendary, godlike inhabitants. And now, the time hath truly come. Prepare thyself, mortal, for thou shalt meet the ever-vigilant Heimdall, Balder the Brave, the stunning Lady Sif, and then—if thou darest—the omniscient, omnipotent Odin, he who is the Way, and the Word, and the Wonder . . .

THE MIGHTY
THOR
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
12¢ IND.
143 AUG
BALDER THE BRAVE!
THE EVIL ENCHANTERS!
THE STUNNING SIF!
PANIC IN THE CITY!
THIS IS IT, TRUE BELIEVER!


THE MIGHTY THOR!
"..AND, SOON SHALL COME:
THE ENCHANTERS!"
WOW! I NEVER THOUGHT THE MIGHTY THOR WOULD COME WALTZIN' IN HERE TO SLURP A SODA THAT WAY!
EVEN A THUNDER GOD MAY FEEL THE PANGS OF THIRST!
FROM NOW ON, THAT DRINK'S GONNA BE KNOWN AS MY ASGARD SPECIAL!
SPECIAL
ICE CREAM
PRODUCED IN LIVING COLOR BY:
STAN (THE MAN) AND JACK (KING)
LEE 'N KIRBY
EMBELLISHED BY:
BILL EVERETT
LETTERED BY:
SAM ROSEN
TRUE BELIEVERS, ALL!
A STRANGE BEGINNING FOR A SUPERHERO SAGA, THOU POST THINK? AHH, THOU SUSPECTEST NOT THE GLORY AND GRANDEUR AWAITING THEE WITHIN...

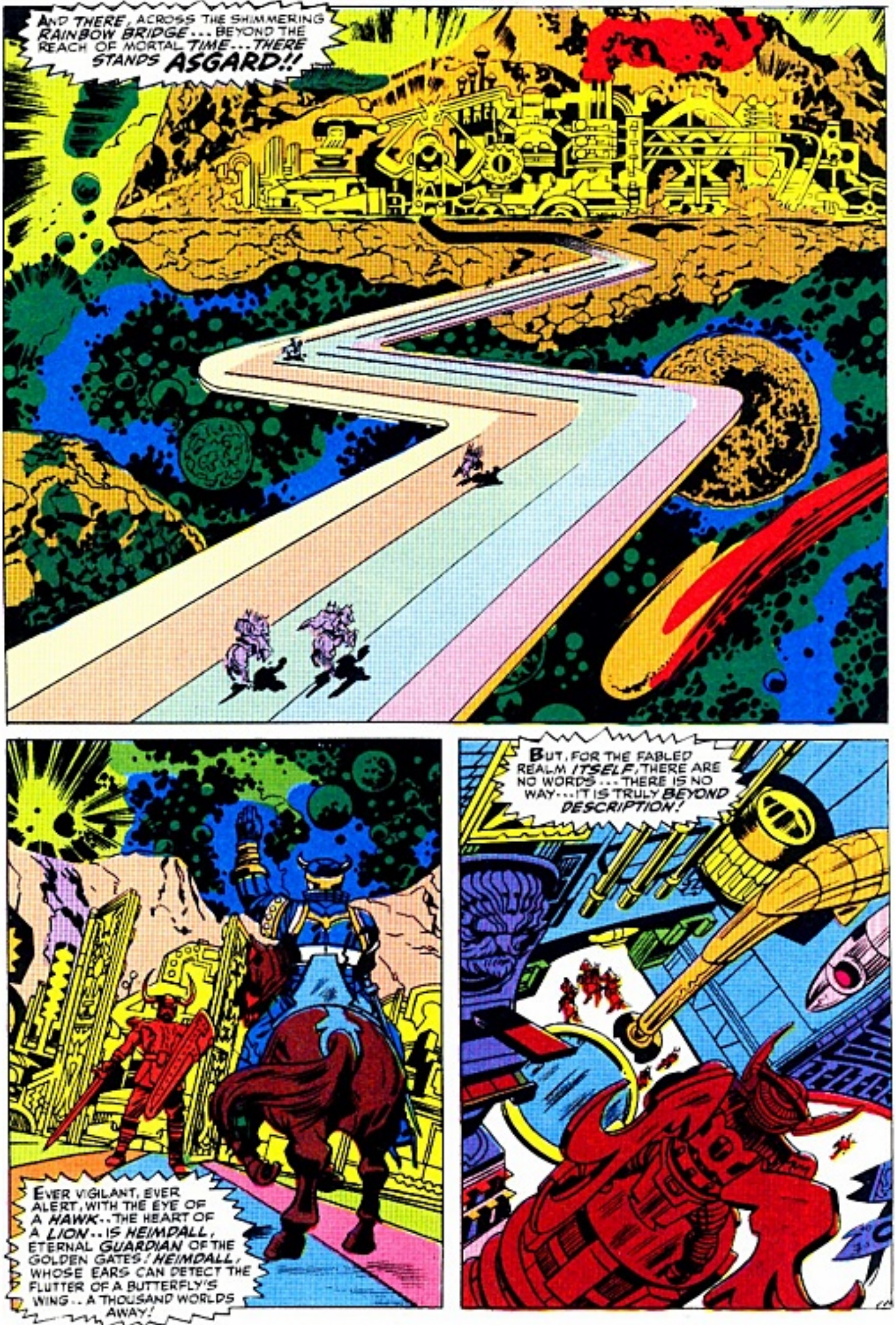

ALAS, I FIND I HAVE NO EARTHLY COIN OF THE REALM UPON MY PERSON...
BUT IF THOU WILT PERMIT ME TO CHARGE YON FROTHY DRINK--?
AND NOW, THE SON OF ODIN MUST BE ON HIS WAY!
FORGET IT, MISTER!! IT'S ON THE HOUSE!
OH, NO!! NOT YET!!
SO BE IT! TRULY, THY HEART IS AS GENEROUS AS THY NECTAR IS SWEET!
PLEASE STAY... JUST A WHILE LONGER!

YOU CAN'T CUT OUT WITHOUT GIVIN' US THE LOW-DOWN ON YOUR PAD IN ASGARD!
THAT'S RIGHT! TELL US IF THE STORIES ABOUT YOU ARE REALLY TRUE!
DO YOU REALLY COME FROM A FABLED LAND... SOMEWHERE FAR BEYOND THE STARS??
CLUE US IN, MISTER! YOU CAN'T JUST EAT N' RUN!

IN TRUTH, THINE INTEREST DOTH GLADDEN THE HEART OF THOR!
BUT, HOW CAN I DESCRIBE THAT WHICH IS BEYOND THE KEN OF MORTAL UNDERSTANDING?

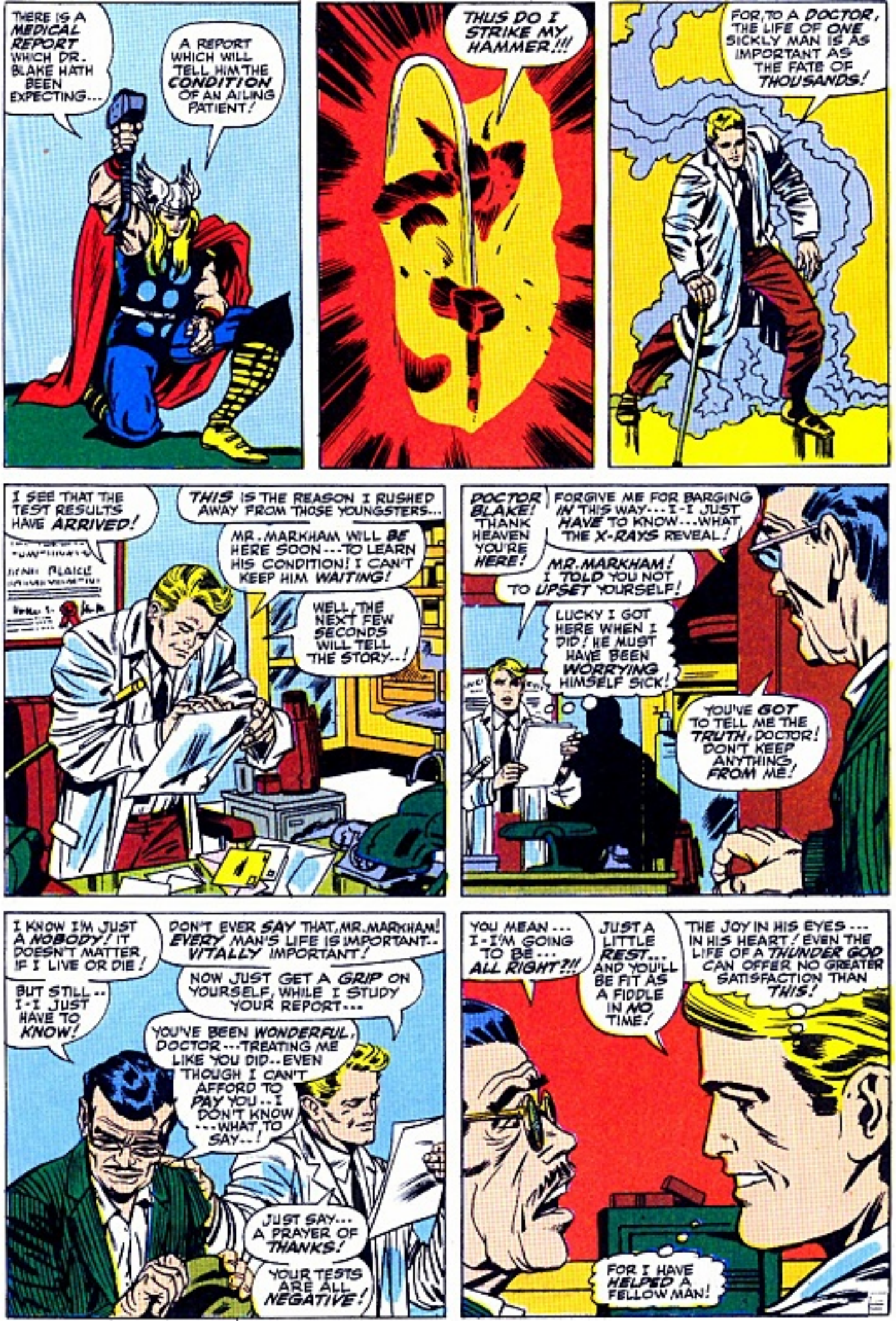
NONETHELESS, I SHALL ATTEMPT TO REVEAL... THE UNREVEALABLE!!
THOU MUST NOW ATTEND MY EVERY WORD!
EMPTY THY MINDS OF ALL EARTHLY THOUGHT... AS I LEAD THEE-- IN SPIRIT... FAR BEYOND THIS LONELY MORTAL VALE!

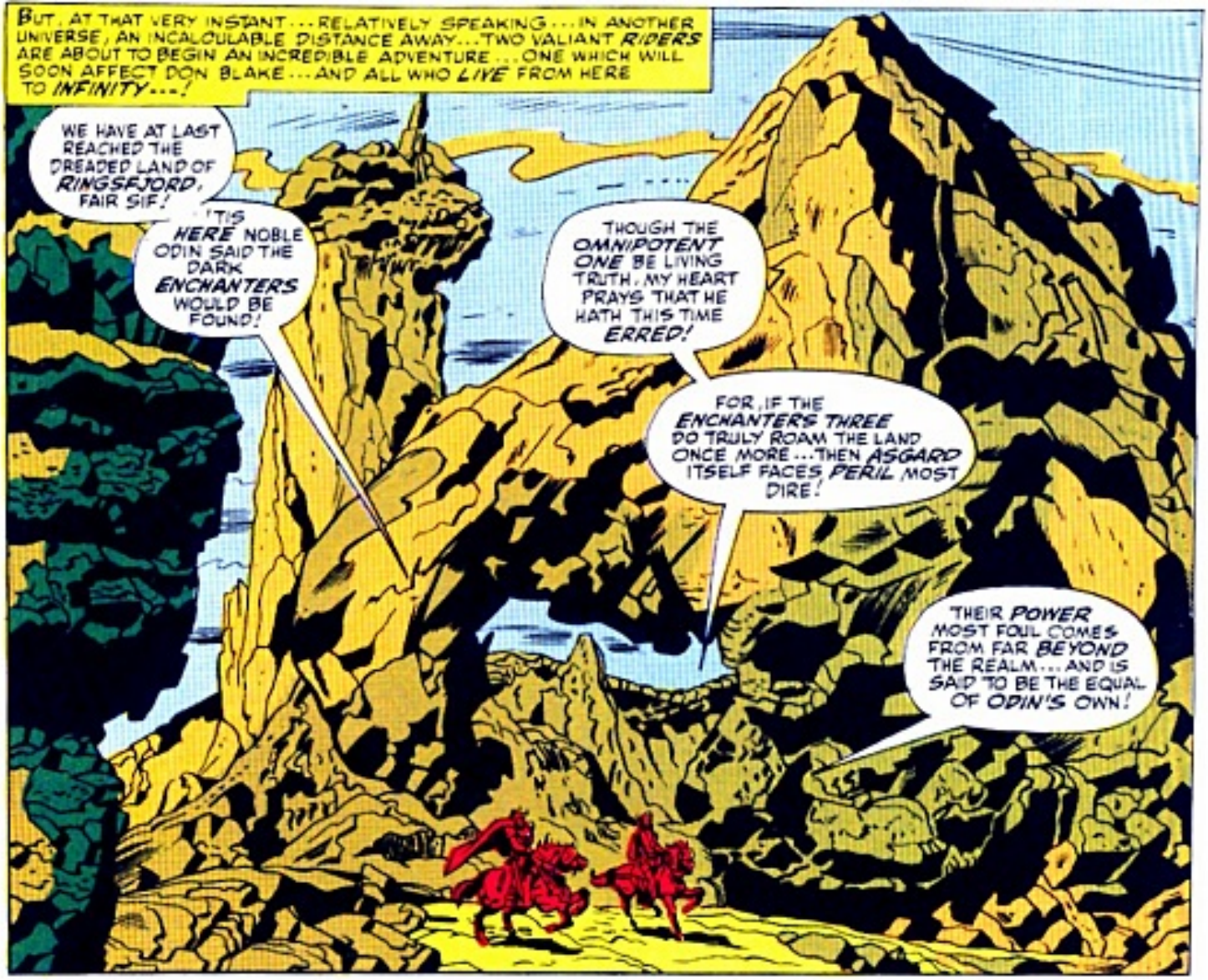
YEA, EVEN BEYOND THE MOST DISTANT STAR... THE FARTHEST GALAXY... THE FINAL UNIVERSE...
...TO THE VERY EDGE OF TIMELESS INFINITY..!


AND THERE, ACROSS THE SHIMMERING RAINBOW BRIDGE... BEYOND THE REACH OF MORTAL TIME...THERE STANDS ASGARD!!
EVER VIGILANT, EVER ALERT, WITH THE EYE OF A HAWK..THE HEART OF A LION..IS HEIMDALL, ETERNAL GUARDIAN OF THE GOLDEN GATES! HEIMDALL, WHOSE EARS CAN DETECT THE FLUTTER OF A BUTTERFLY'S WING..A THOUSAND WORLDS AWAY!
BUT, FOR THE FABLED REALM ITSELF, THERE ARE NO WORDS...THERE IS NO WAY...IT IS TRULY BEYOND DESCRIPTION!

YEA, BEYOND DESCRIPTION.. EVEN AS HE WHO RULES THE FABLED REALM IS BEYOND DESCRIPTION...FOR HE DOTH SURPASS ALL UNDERSTANDING!
ODIN... MAKER OF THE LAW.. SPEAKER OF THE WORD KEEPER OF THE FAITH!!
LET IT SUFFICE TO KNOW THAT HE BE ODIN... THE ALL-WISE.. THE TRULY OMNIPOTENT!!
ODIN! THE LASTING POWER.. THE LIGHTNING WRATH... THE LIVING JUDGMENT!!
VERILY, HE BE ASGARD INCARNATE!! AND, TO THE GOD OF THUNDER, HE BE ONE THING MORE--
HE BE FLESH OF MY FLESH... BLOOD OF MY BLOOD!!
FOR, HIM DO I CALL... FATHER!!

BUT, I HAVE SPOKEN ENOW!
THINGS THERE ARE WHICH BEST BE LEFT UNUTTERED!
AW, NO!! YOU CAN'T STOP NOW! NOT AFTER YOU GOT US ALL HOOKED!
'TIS TIME TO TAKE MY LEAVE! STAND YE ALL ASIDE!
DIDST THOU NOT HEAR THE WORDS OF THOR?
THOU MUST NOT PURSUE ME AS THOUGH I BE A MORTAL SINGER OF SONGS!
STAND YE BACK, I SAY! I FIND THIS MOST UNSEEMLY!
PLEASE DON'T LEAVE SO SOON!
IF THEY'RE ALL LIKE YOU, WE WANT THE DIRECTIONS TO ASGARD!
FIE UPON IT!
'TIS EASIER BY FAR TO FLEE SOME UNEARTHLY MENACE THAN SUCH AS THEY!
THOUGH, TRUTH TO TELL, I FIND THEIR SPIRIT--- THEIR ENTHUSIASM ---NOT UN-PLEASING!
BUT, THERE ARE OTHER MATTERS TO OCCUPY THE GOD OF THUNDER---
AND, HIS MORTAL COUNTERPART, AS WELL!
FOR, THE TIME IS COME TO SHED THIS GODLY RAIMENT...
---AND RESUME THE MORTAL LIFE OF DON BLAKE ---PHYSICIAN!


THERE IS A MEDICAL REPORT WHICH DR. BLAKE HATH BEEN EXPECTING...
A REPORT WHICH WILL TELL HIM THE CONDITION OF AN AILING PATIENT!
THUS DO I STRIKE MY HAMMER!!!
FOR, TO A DOCTOR, THE LIFE OF ONE SICKLY MAN IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE FATE OF THOUSANDS!
I SEE THAT THE TEST RESULTS HAVE ARRIVED!
THIS IS THE REASON I RUSHED AWAY FROM THOSE YOUNGSTERS...
MR. MARKHAM WILL BE HERE SOON---TO LEARN HIS CONDITION! I CAN'T KEEP HIM WAITING!
WELL, THE NEXT FEW SECONDS WILL TELL THE STORY--!
DOCTOR BLAKE! THANK HEAVEN YOU'RE HERE!
FORGIVE ME FOR BARGING IN THIS WAY--- I-I JUST HAVE TO KNOW---WHAT THE X-RAYS REVEAL!
MR. MARKHAM! I TOLD YOU NOT TO UPSET YOURSELF!
LUCKY I GOT HERE WHEN I DID! HE MUST HAVE BEEN WORRYING HIMSELF SICK!
YOU'VE GOT TO TELL ME THE TRUTH, DOCTOR! DON'T KEEP ANYTHING FROM ME!
I KNOW I'M JUST A NOBODY! IT DOESN'T MATTER IF I LIVE OR DIE!
DON'T EVER SAY THAT, MR. MARKHAM! EVERY MAN'S LIFE IS IMPORTANT--VITALLY IMPORTANT!
BUT STILL-- I-I JUST HAVE TO KNOW!
NOW JUST GET A GRIP ON YOURSELF, WHILE I STUDY YOUR REPORT---
YOU'VE BEEN WONDERFUL, DOCTOR---TREATING ME LIKE YOU DID--EVEN THOUGH I CAN'T AFFORD TO PAY YOU--I DON'T KNOW ---WHAT TO SAY--!
JUST SAY... A PRAYER OF THANKS!
YOUR TESTS ARE ALL NEGATIVE!
YOU MEAN--- I-I'M GOING TO BE... ALL RIGHT?!!
JUST A LITTLE REST... AND YOU'LL BE FIT AS A FIDDLE IN NO TIME!
THE JOY IN HIS EYES--- IN HIS HEART! EVEN THE LIFE OF A THUNDER GOD CAN OFFER NO GREATER SATISFACTION THAN THIS!
FOR I HAVE HELPED A FELLOW MAN!


BUT, AT THAT VERY INSTANT...RELATIVELY SPEAKING...IN ANOTHER UNIVERSE, AN INCALCULABLE DISTANCE AWAY...TWO VALIANT RIDERS ARE ABOUT TO BEGIN AN INCREDIBLE ADVENTURE...ONE WHICH WILL SOON AFFECT DON BLAKE...AND ALL WHO LIVE FROM HERE TO INFINITY...!
WE HAVE AT LAST REACHED THE DREADED LAND OF RINGSFJORD, FAIR SIF!
'TIS HERE NOBLE ODIN SAID THE DARK ENCHANTERS WOULD BE FOUND!
THOUGH THE OMNIPOTENT ONE BE LIVING TRUTH, MY HEART PRAYS THAT HE HATH THIS TIME ERRED!
FOR, IF THE ENCHANTERS THREE DO TRULY ROAM THE LAND ONCE MORE...THEN ASGARD ITSELF FACES PERIL MOST DIRE!
THEIR POWER MOST FOUL COMES FROM FAR BEYOND THE REALM...AND IS SAID TO BE THE EQUAL OF ODIN'S OWN!

BALDER!! LOOK TO THY MOUNT! THE VERY GROUND BELOW DOTH ERUPT BENEATH OUR FEET!
'TIS THE ENCHANTERS, MY LADY!
THEY HAVE FOUND US!
KROOM

ABANDON THY STEED!!
UPON OUR FEET ALONE IS A MEASURE OF SAFETY NOW TO BE FOUND!

BEHIND ME, MY LADY! WHATE'ER MAY BEFALL... BALDER'S BLADE MUST MEET IT FIRST!
I SAY THEE NAY, MY LORD! THOUGH I BE WOMAN BORN, MY BLADE IS TRUE... MY ARM IS SWIFT!
WE EACH DO FIGHT FOR ASGARD.. AND SHALL DO SO SIDE-BY-SIDE!

IN TRUTH THOU ART GODDESS MOST FIT FOR THE MIGHTY SON OF ODIN!
HOW MY HEART DOTH WISH THE LIPS OF THOR WOULD MOUTH SUCH WORDS, MY LORD!
BUT NOW... 'TIS TIME FOR OTHER MATTERS!
ENCHANTERS!! HEED THE CHALLENGE OF BALDER.. STAND YE FORTH!!

AS THOUGH IN ANSWER TO THY WORDS... AN EXPLOSION MOST GIGANTIC HATH OCCURRED!
AND A CLOUD TAKES SHAPE ABOVE US...
A CLOUD OF EVIL.. GROWING DARKER THAN THE BLACKEST NIGHT!

BEHOLD!! WITHIN YON CLOUD.. A FACE IS FORMED!
I-AM-THE-SPIRIT-OF-THE-LIVING-TALISMEN-WHICH-DO-SERVE-THE-THREE-ENCHANTERS!

AND I AM BALDER... WARRIOR OF ASGARD!
BE THE ENCHANTERS SO COWARDLY THAT THEY SEND NAUGHT BUT AN EMPTY CLOUD TO OPPOSE US??
DO NOT SEEK TO ANGER HIM, MY LORD!
THE TALISMEN ARE POSSESSED OF POWER BEYOND OUR COMPREHENSION!
NO MATTER! THE GAUNTLET HATH BEEN FLUNG! NOW STAND WE FAST!

WARRIOR, THOU ART A FOOL!
THOU HAST CALLED ME AN EMPTY CLOUD...
BUT MY MASTERS HAVE THE POWER TO GIVE ME FAR MORE SUBSTANTIAL FORM...
SUCH IS THE WAY OF--THE ENCHANTERS!
NOW THOU SHALT FEEL THE MIGHT OF THE TALISMAN!!
NOT WHILST BALDER POSSESSES THE SPEED TO EVADE THY BLOW!
BACK, CREATURE OF DARKNESS... BACK TO THE STYGIAN SHADOWS FROM WHENCE THOU CAME!
NAY, FAIR SIF! THY SWORD CANNOT PREVAIL AGAINST ONE SUCH AS HE!
MY SWORD STRIKES FOR ASGARD!! IT SHALL NEVER BE STILLED!
BAH! MUST THE TALISMAN'S MATCHLESS STRENGTH BE SQUANDERED AGAINST A FEMALE?
NEVER... WHILST BALDER LIVES!!
TRY THOUGH I MAY,... I CANNOT GET WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE... I CANNOT REACH MY FOE!
HIS BLUDGEON IS TOO SWIFT... TOO LARGE!
THEN IT SHALL BE BLUDGEON NO MORE!
THE TIME IS PAST FOR FOR WAITING!! NOW MUST BALDER STRIKE!

THOU HAST SHATTERED MY BLUDGEON!
THUS, I MUST CRUSH THEE.. BY THE WEIGHT OF MY BODY.. THE STRENGH OF MY LIMBS!
BRAVE ONE... DO NOT DESPAIR! SIF SHALL STRIKE AGAIN!
NAY, WOMAN!! STAND THEE BACK!!
WHAT MUST NOW BE DONE, SHALL BALDER DO... AND DO ALONE!!
FOR ASGARD... AND HONOR ETERNAL!
BALDER!! THOU HAST BESTED HIM... WITH BUT A SINGLE BLOW!
SEE HOW HE VANISHES.. IN BUT A SUDDEN FLASH!
AY, THOUGH THE WORST IS YET TO BE...!
NOW THE ENCHANTERS MOST SURELY WILL APPEAR!
THY WORDS ARE PROPHETIC, MAN OF ASGARD!
UPON YON HILLTOP.. 'TIS THEY!
BUT, BY MY BLADE... NO FURTHER SHALL THEY COME!

TWO SUCH AS THEE CANNOT STOP US... FOR WE DO WEAR THE LIVING TALISMEN!
KNOW YOU THAT I BE MAGNIR... IN COMPANY WITH MY FELLOWS, FORSUNG... AND BRONA!!
REMEMBER THOSE NAMES AND TREMBLE, ASGARDIAN... FOR WE ARE THE THREE WHO SOON SHALL HUMBLE ODIN HIMSELF!
FOR COUNTLESS AGES, WE HAVE BEEN CONTENT TO RULE OUR OWN DOMAIN.. BUT, WE BE CONTENT NO LONGER!
WE THREE, WHO WEAR THE LIVING TALISMEN, POSSESS POWER BEYOND MEASURE... POWER ENOW TO CONQUER ALL WHO LIVE!
FOR OURS IS THE LIMITLESS POWER OF..THE ENCHANTERS!
WHY WASTE WE WORDS ON SUCH AS THEY?
WE CAN DESTROY THEM WITH A WORD... WITH THE SLIGHTEST GLANCE..!

BRONA SPEAKS TRUE!
LET THERE BE AN END TO THIS!
IT WILL REQUIRE BUT THE MEREST FRACTION OF OUR POWER TO DO THE DEED!
LET IT THEN BE DONE!
BRONA WEARIES OF YON USELESS PRATTLE!
THOU HATH HEARD THY SENTENCE! NOW PERISH, ASGARDIANS!

THE GROUND UPON WHICH WE STAND---IT HATH TURNED TO THICKENING QUICKSAND!!
AT LAST HATH BALDER FOUND A FOE TO WHOM HIS BLADE DOTH HAVE NO MEANING!
IT DRAGS US HELPLESSLY TO OUR DOOM!
MAIDEN--SEIZE MY SHOULDER! I SHALL SUPPORT THEE--TO THE END!
NAY, BRAVE ONE! 'TIS USELESS THUS!
DO MINE EARS DECEIVE ME?? HATH THE STEADFAST SIF ABANDONED HOPE??

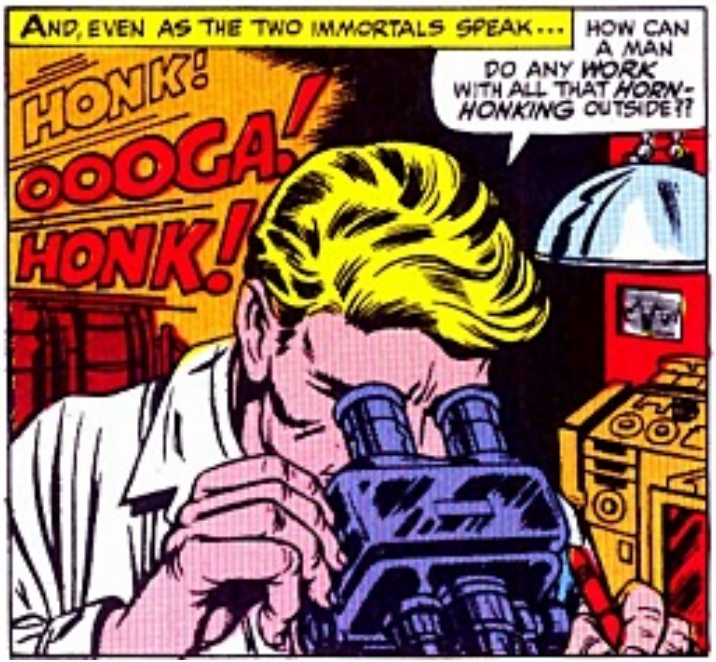
NAY, MOST LOYAL BALDER!!
I DO BUT PLAN FOR OUR ESCAPE.. THROUGH USE OF MINE OWN SPECIAL POWER!
OF COURSE!! THY DIVINE RIGHT, AS GODDESS BORN...
THE POWER TO BYPASS TIME AND SPACE!!*
NOW..WITH MY FINGERS TOUCHING THINE.. BENEATH THE THICKENING BOG...
*A POWER MOST AWESOMELY ILLUSTRATED AS RECENTLY AS IN THOR #139...DOST THOU WELL REMEMBER, O TRUE BELIEVER?
--- STAN THE SCRIPTER.

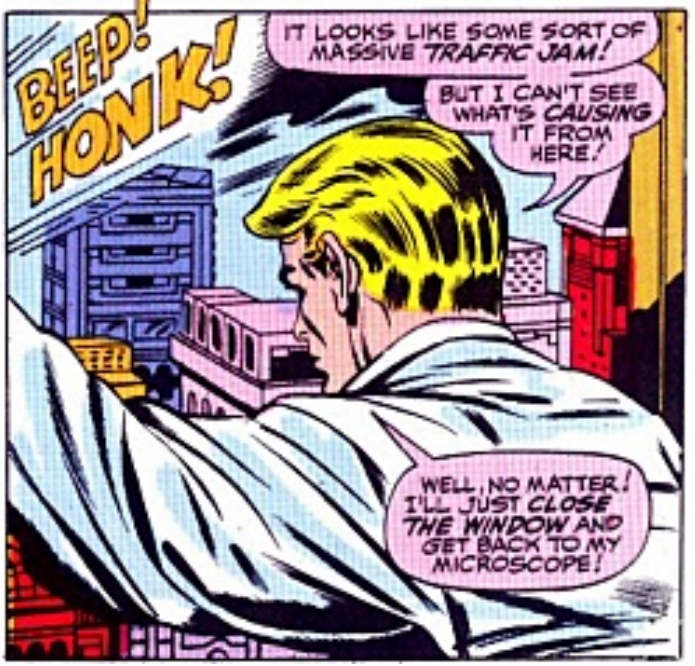
WE SHALL BEGONE!!

FASTER THAN MORTAL MIND CAN COMPREHEND ... FASTER THAN THE SPEED OF THOUGHT ITSELF ... TWO GALLANT FIGURES PIERCE THE FABRIC OF INFINITY AS THEY HURTLE TOWARDS ...

MIDGARD! KNOWN TO THE HUMANS AS PLANET EARTH!
THY COURAGE ... AND THY SKILL HAVE SAVED US, FAIR ONE!
HERE WE SHALL FIND SAFETY ... FOR THE PRESENT!
AND THOU HAST BROUGHT US TO THE PLACE WHERE DWELLS MIGHTY THOR!

WE MUST FIND HIM, BALDER!
AY, MY LADY!
BUT, HERE AMONGST THE HUMANS, HE DOTH DWELL IN SECRET MORTAL GUISE!
FOR, WHILST THE ENCHANTERS LIVE ... WE MOST SORELY NEED HIS STRENGTH, HIS WISDOM ... HIS KNOWLEDGE!
'TWILL BE EASIER BY FAR FOR HIM TO LOCATE US!

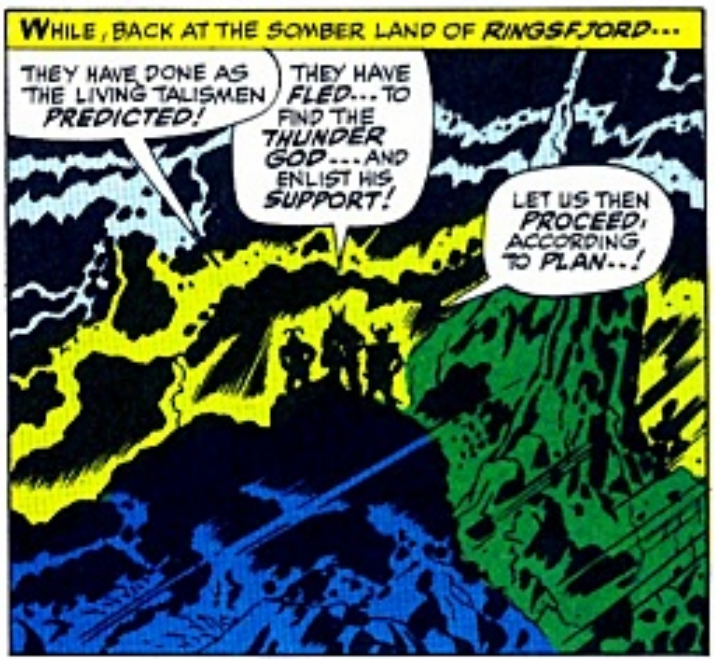

AND, EVEN AS THE TWO IMMORTALS SPEAK ...
HOW CAN A MAN DO ANY WORK WITH ALL THAT HORN-HONKING OUTSIDE?!
HONK!
OOOGA!
HONK!


BEEP!
HONK!
IT LOOKS LIKE SOME SORT OF MASSIVE TRAFFIC JAM!
BUT I CAN'T SEE WHAT'S CAUSING IT FROM HERE!
WELL, NO MATTER! I'LL JUST CLOSE THE WINDOW AND GET BACK TO MY MICROSCOPE!

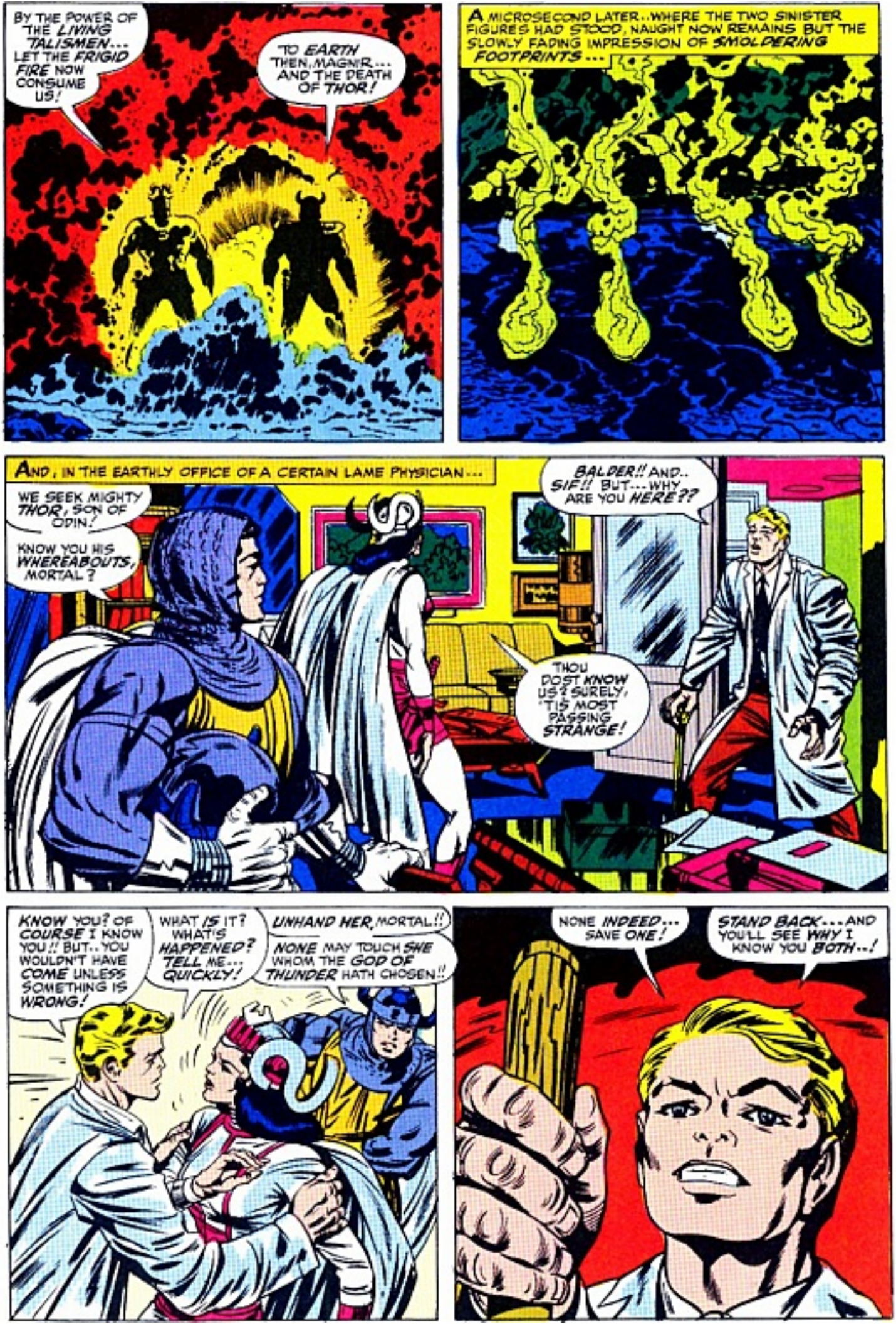
BUT, HAD DON BLAKE THE VISION OF HEIMDALL, HE WOULD HAVE SEEN, IN THE STREET BELOW...
'TIS IMPERATIVE THAT THOU DIRECT US TO THOR, GOD OF THUNDER!
LOOK, MAC---FOR THE LAST TIME..., I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE HANGS OUT!
AND YOU TWO CAN'T STAND AROUND HERE BLOCKIN' TRAFFIC THIS WAY!!
FORBUSH TRUCKING CO.
IF THOR BE NOT SOON FOUND, THOU SHALT HAVE WORSE THAN WE TO CONTEND WITH!

SAY! COME TO THINK OF IT, THERE IS A DR. BLAKE NEARBY!
HE'S MANAGED TO GET IN TOUCH WITH THAT LONG-HAIRED HAMMER-TOSSER FOR THE DEPARTMENT BEFORE!
THEN YOU MUST TAKE US TO HIM... WHILE THERE IS STILL TIME!

SURE, LADY.. SURE!
I'LL TAKE YOU ANYWHERE IF IT'LL GET THINGS BACK TO NORMAL ON MY BEAT AGAIN!
EVEN IF THE DOC CAN'T TELL YOU WHERE TO FIND THOR, MEBBE HE CAN RECOMMEND A GOOD HEAD-SHRINKER FOR THE TWO OF YA!
WHAT? DOST THOU THINK US MAD?
WALKIN' AROUND TOWN IN GET-UPS LIKE THAT?
PERISH FORBID!


WHILE, BACK AT THE SOMBER LAND OF RINGSFJORD...
THEY HAVE DONE AS THE LIVING TALISMEN PREDICTED!
THEY HAVE FLED... TO FIND THE THUNDER GOD... AND ENLIST HIS SUPPORT!
LET US THEN PROCEED, ACCORDING TO PLAN..!

BRONA AND I SHALL FOLLOW THEM... SO THAT ALL THREE MAY BE DESTROYED!
WHILST I SET FORTH FOR ASGARD... THERE TO VANQUISH ODIN!
HAVE A CARE, FORSUNG! THOU ART BUT ONE!
AY! BUT AM I NOT... AN ENCHANTER?!!


BY THE POWER OF THE LIVING TALISMEN... LET THE FRIGID FIRE NOW CONSUME US!
"TO EARTH THEN, MAGNIR... AND THE DEATH OF THOR!
A MICROSECOND LATER..WHERE THE TWO SINISTER FIGURES HAD STOOD, NAUGHT NOW REMAINS BUT THE SLOWLY FADING IMPRESSION OF SMOLDERING FOOTPRINTS...
AND, IN THE EARTHLY OFFICE OF A CERTAIN LAME PHYSICIAN...
WE SEEK MIGHTY THOR, SON OF ODIN!
KNOW YOU HIS WHEREABOUTS, MORTAL?
BALDER!! AND.. SIF!! BUT...WHY ARE YOU HERE??
THOU DOST KNOW US? SURELY, 'TIS MOST PASSING STRANGE!
KNOW YOU? OF COURSE I KNOW YOU!! BUT..YOU WOULDN'T HAVE COME UNLESS SOMETHING IS WRONG!
WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S HAPPENED? TELL ME... QUICKLY!
UNHAND HER, MORTAL!!
NONE MAY TOUCH SHE WHOM THE GOD OF THUNDER HATH CHOSEN!!
NONE INDEED... SAVE ONE!
STAND BACK...AND YOU'LL SEE WHY I KNOW YOU BOTH..!

KTOOOM!

'TIS YOU, MY LORD! WE HAVE FOUND THE THUNDER GOD!
MY HEART IS GLADDENED AT THE VERY SIGHT OF THEE!
FOR THOU ART TWO WHOM I HOLD MOST DEAR!
TAKE HEED, MIGHTY ONE!
WE HAVE COME TO WARN THEE...OF DANGER MOST DEADLY!

EVEN NOW, THE ENCHANTERS PREPARE TO STRIKE!!
THE ENCHANTERS!!
POSSESSORS OF THE LIVING TALISMEN!! MOST EVIL---MOST POWERFUL OF ALL LIVING FOES!

BUT, THOUGH THEY BE A MATCH FOR ODIN HIMSELF...WE SHALL PREVAIL!
MY LORD!! ONLY NOW...STANDING IN THY PRESENCE--DO I FEEL VICTORY MAY YET BE OURS!
THUS SPEAKS THOR!!
TRULY, THOU ART NOBLEST--THOU ART MIGHTIEST... AND MOST GALLANT OF ALL WHO LIVE!
WHILST HUMBLE BALDER--IS NOW--FORGOT!

THOUGH THEY BE TOO GENEROUS BY FAR, THY WORDS DO SURELY WARM MY HEART!
BUT WHAT OF THEE, LOYAL BALDER? WHY STANDEST THOU SO SILENT?
HAST THOU NO RALLYING CRY UPON THIS EVE OF BATTLE?
NAY, THUNDER GOD! I HAVE MUCH TO THINK UPON!

AND, AS NOBLE BALDER GAZES SOMBERLY AHEAD, TWO FLASHING OBJECTS STREAK THROUGH THE SKY---

...FINALLY LANDING, AND RESHAPING THEMSELVES INTO THE AWESOME FIGURES OF..THE ENCHANTERS!!
NEXT!
"THIS BATTLEGROUND EARTH!"

PART FIVE

MAINLY ABOUT A MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS

BEFORE recklessly charging into the beckoning world of the occult which we, in our shameless beneficence, have chosen to prepare for you, I suggest that we pause yet a moment longer to reflect upon a somewhat singular phenomenon which has long been identified with our lilting little library of Marvel masterworks—namely, the phenomenon of at least one bone-headed boo-boo per issue.

You may find it hard to believe that a stalwart staff of perfectionists such as our own Marvel madmen could be capable of the many mind-boggling mistakes which have plagued us since The Human Torch was just a glowing ember, but the record is clear. No matter how carefully we proofread each strip—no matter how often we edit and re-edit every single page, every single panel—some idiotic, embarrassing error always seems to slip by. And, in case you're wondering why I bring up so delicate a subject at this particular time, it's because I've just noticed one of those agonizing little oversights on the last page of the initial Thor story which I assume you've just read and relished. You've probably spotted it too, but if you didn't—hold everything. Don't read another word. Turn back to the final page of Thor's introductory saga and see if you can find it. You won't be charged a cent extra for this serendipitous little offering.

Did you get it? It was the last panel, right? After devoting an entire story to the exploits of a hero named Thor—spelled T-H-O-R, right?—after lettering his name more than a dozen times in that one issue, we actually managed to misspell it in the ad which appears in the very last panel! But, if you think *that's* bad—let me tell you about the origin of Dr. Strange. (Thought I'd forgotten, huh?)

Dr. Strange first appeared as a mystical Marvel hero in issue #110 of *Strange Tales,* dated July 1963. But it wasn't till issue #115, dated December 1963 that we presented his origin! In other words,

it wasn't till five months after his debut that we suddenly remembered we'd better tell the readers who he was and how he got that way.

Naturally, that cockeyed chronology poses a somewhat perplexing problem for us now. In preparing this awesomely academic text, with accuracy as our watchword, I find myself straddling the horns of a dilemma. Do I now present you with the first Dr. Strange story ever to see print—which is not actually the origin episode—or do I present the actual Dr. Strange origin tale—which is not actually the first episode? Either way, we risk the danger of confounding historians of the future and causing chaos in the literary community. This is not the moment for error; this is no time for indecision; now let us show the stuff of which Marvel is made—let us rise to the challenge, no matter the cost. The die is cast. On the pages that follow we shall bestow upon you both the first Dr. Strange saga, and the later episode which contained his origin. Two for the price of one, as is the Marvel way. But first, a word from our sponsor . . .

Before you enter the magical, mystical world of Dr. Strange, another impromptu briefing might be in order. After all, the good doctor is somewhat different from your average Marvel superhero. And therein lies a tale.

So far we've studied the creation and presentation of Marvel's four earliest and most popular superhero successes, and I must say your conduct has been exemplary. However, during the early days of The FF, Hulk, Spidey, and Thor there were quite a few other Marvel mags which we haven't yet mentioned. One of these was called *Strange Tales.*

Strange Tales, like many other Marvel titles which I've unceremoniously overlooked due to lack of space and memory, contained various short stories of mystery and fantasy, but no main characters who continued from issue to issue. One day, having nothing better to do, I decided to attempt to tie the whole Marvel line more closely together. Since The Human Torch was tremendously popular in *The Fantastic Four,* I thought it would be a good idea for him to appear in another strip as well—a shorter story in which he would be the solo star. Looking around for the proper vehicle I noticed *Strange Tales,* and shortly thereafter The Human Torch was featured as the star of that book.

The idea seemed to catch on. Sales increased by leaps and bounds

—or perhaps I should say by flight and flame. But The Torch's tales accounted for only half the magazine. There were usually two or three other stories in each issue, odd vignettes which were included just for variety. Since there's nothing subtle about my thinking processes, I figured if one superhero could make a mag successful, think of what two might do. See what I mean?

Okay. All that remained was to find another type of character who could join our fabled little family of folk heroes. And so it began.

Remember when I told you that I'd enjoyed reading *The Spider* when I was a kid? Well, there was an old-time radio show that flipped me out, also. It was called *Chandu, the Magician.* I'll never forget the goosebumps that ran up and down my spine when the announcer, employing the most stentorian tones imaginable, would solemnly say, "Channnnnnndu, the Magician," and then the loudest gong in all the universe would sound. It was like this: "Channnnnnndu, the Magician" *BONNNNNGGG!* Even now it turns me on.

I can't remember the stories—can't remember who the villains were, or what Chandu's precise powers were, or where he lived, or how he made his living, or anything. But I'll never forget that *BONNNNNGGG!* And I'll never forget how I wouldn't miss one of those radio episodes for the world—not that it was ever offered to me.

Anyway, Steve Ditko once again took up the art chores while I penned the words, and before you could say "Who needs it?" Dr. Strange was born. He was a magician. And if ever we do his stories on the radio you'd better believe he's gonna have a gong!

But, as with our other costumed cavorters, there's more to him than meets the eye. In the beginning we kept cautiously feeling our way with Dr. Strange. But, as the series picked up steam, as we got to know him better, the same thing happened that had happened to Thor. We began, almost despite ourselves, to create an entire universe for him—a universe peopled with very special characters and very special attributes, and with what proved most exciting to me, a very special language.

Look at it this way. You're writing stories about a magician. Since he's a magician, he's got to do something magical. When he performs his magic feat he's got to say something. Whether it be "Abracadabra" or "Presto change-o" there must be a sound accompanying the gesture—it's the expected thing. So you've reached the point in the story where your magician hero wants the villain to be transported

to another dimension . . . magically. Okay, how do you do it? That is, what does your hero say? It's up to you.

You can have him mutter, "Split to another dimension, man," but that may leave a little to be desired in the department of melodrama. Or he could shout, "Hocus pocus, go to another dimension." Still a bit less than emotionally fulfilling, right? Well, in some stories the hero just says what he has to say, "Off to another dimension with ye, bejabbers," and that's that. But me, I really worry about these things. They've got to be right—dramatically.

The best stories of all, whether in comic books, TV shows, movies, novels, or whatever, are the stories in which the characters seem to be real. You feel you know them, you understand them, you can relate to them. And what makes them so? Mostly it's their dialogue. The well-written character is the one who is always verbally true to form. Every character must have his own manner of speech, and the style and content of his delivery must be constant. Dickens worked at it in his novels; Herriman did it with Krazy Kat; can we do any less? No, no, a thousand times no! I was bound and determined that Dr. Strange would never say, "Hocus pocus, go to another dimension!"

When it comes to words I'm a real cornball. I enjoy them. I relish their sound, the music made by vowels and consonants eternally jostling each other. I can lose myself completely while putting them together, trying to string them on a delicate strand of rhythm so they have a melody all their own. So, when it came to Dr. Strange I was in seventh heaven. At last I'd have a chance to be as alliterative and shmaltzy as I could wish. With Thor, I was influenced by Shakespeare and the Bible as I turned to "Whither goest thou?" and similar phrases; but with Dr. Strange there were no landmarks, no points of reference. With Dr. Strange I had the chance to make up a whole language of incantations.

Little by little it all took shape. Since I didn't know an authentic mystic chant from a Martian egg roll I had to rely on phonetics. What would sound mystical? What might a real magician say if he were intoning a genuine magical spell? There must be gods and demons in the realm of magic; surely the magician would summon them, would mutter their names in moments of crisis. Hence, my first task was to make up some authentic-sounding names for Doc to call upon. And so it began.

The first phrase I thought of was as totally meaningless as all the

others that were to follow—but I loved the sound of it: "By the hoary hosts of Hoggoth." No matter what he did, no matter what he wanted, no matter what he said, it always seemed to sound more dramatic when preceded by "By the hoary hosts of Hoggoth." Even if he was just hungry. "By the hoary hosts of Hoggoth, I feel like a pizza." Grabs you, doesn't it?

Well, one thing led to another. Before we knew it we had "In the name of the eternal Vishanti," "By the shades of the shadowy Seraphim," "The all-seeing eye of Agamotto," "The seven rings of Raggadorr" (later changed to "The roving rings of Raggadorr"), not to be confused with "The mystic moons of Munnopor." I actually made up a whole list of names and sounds that seemed to go well together. Eventually, it worked like this. Let's say Spider-Man sees Dr. Strange lurking on a rooftop. Now Spidey doesn't know that Doc's a good guy, and since the web-slinger doesn't generally trust rooftop lurkers, he attacks our hero. But The Master of the Mystic Arts hasn't time to either battle or persuade Spider-Man—he's on that rooftop to save the human race from the dread Dormammu. All he can do is quickly utter an incantation to get the web-head out of his hair. Are you ready for this?

"Demons of Darkness,
In the name of Satannish,
By the flames of the Faltine
Let Spider-Man vanish!"

You can almost believe in it, huh? Better than "Hocus pocus, go away." But now, let me tell you the funny part.

Dr. Strange, which I always thought would prove exceptionally appealing to our younger readers, began to develop a cult among those at the other end of the spectrum. Suddenly the mail started pouring in—from colleges, if you will. In ever-increasing numbers students were actually devoting term papers and theses to the language of Dr. Strange, investigating the derivation of his various spells and incantations. And the payoff was—many, many of those theses explained, in detailed chapter and verse, how I had obviously borrowed from the ancient Druid writings, or from forbidden Egyptian hieroglyphics, or at least the writings of H. P. Lovecraft. Then, my correspondents would explain the relationship of Raggadorr to Ragnarok, or trace the origin of the eternal Vishanti right back to the

Book of Genesis. But the worst part was when they ended their letters by asking me to confirm that their conclusions were correct. After they had done all that research, all that probing and digging, how could I tell them it wasn't so—I had made it all up? Finally I copped out by admitting I had been a vociferous reader in my younger days, and perhaps I had subconsciously retained a lot of what I'd read only to use it later in recording the saga of Dr. Strange. No need to tell them I'd never studied Egyptian hieroglyphics and wouldn't know any ancient Druid writings if they were tattooed on my dome.

Still, I must admit one thing. There's always the chance that an alien power from some distant dimension had taken control of my senses when I started writing Dr. Strange. The reason I say that is—the spells must have come from somewhere. Perhaps I couldn't have made them up. After all, if you've read all the stories, you know as well as I do, that they always work!

But enough of this erudition. Even as we draw ever nearer to the artwork that awaits us, one thought disturbs me. The spells of which we have spoken, the names we've bandied about—like the dread Dormammu, or Hoggoth—none of these is much in evidence in the origin tales of Dr. Strange. Once again, as with Thor and our other heroes, the elements which were later to earn the highest accolades of comicdom did not really appear until well after the strip's initial launching. Here I am writing about all the fantastic qualities of the various characters concerned, but when you read the origin stories you'll see little or none of what I've spoken about. How, then, how can I feel you'll ever believe me again?

And yet, a light burns faintly at the end of the tunnel. There still is hope. There still are other stories, later stories, stories containing ample evidence of what we've discussed—concrete and living proof that Stan Lee spaketh not with forked tongue. You and I shall seek these stories out and find them, and then—by the vacuous vapors of Valtorr, doubt shall dwell in thy breast no more.

But first, another dazzling moment of discovery is now at hand. The time has come to meet The Master of the Mystic Arts as he first appeared to a madly appreciative reading public. Thus far have I led you—now we must pierce the veil together as we enter the murky mists of the macabre. But be stout of heart, believer. No matter where Destiny takes us, Marveldom Assembled is ever at our side.

"Dr. STRANGE MASTER OF BLACK MAGIC!"

MEN CALL HIM DR. STRANGE!
NEVER HAVE YOU KNOWN HIS LIKE!
IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE AND PRIVILEGE FOR THE EDITORS OF STRANGE TALES TO PRESENT, QUIETLY AND WITHOUT FANFARE, THE FIRST OF A NEW SERIES, BASED UPON A DIFFERENT KIND OF SUPER-HERO---
DR. STRANGE MASTER OF BLACK MAGIC!
STORY: STAN LEE
ART: STEVE DITKO
LETTERING: TERRY SZENICS

SOMEWHERE IN THE CITY, BETWEEN DARKNESS AND DAWN, A TORTURED MAN TOSSES FITFULLY IN HIS BED, VAINLY SEEKING PEACE THAT WILL NOT COME...
NO! NO!! GO AWAY! PLEASE-- PLEASE GO AWAY!

I CAN'T FIGHT IT ALONE! I NEED HELP! I'VE HEARD A NAME--- SPOKEN IN WHISPERS--- DR. STRANGE! HE DABBLES IN BLACK MAGIC! PERHAPS HE CAN HELP ME!

THE NEXT MORNING, ON A QUIET SIDE STREET IN NEW YORK'S COLORFUL GREENWICH VILLAGE...
I'M HERE TO SEE DR. STRANGE! HE DOESN'T KNOW ME, BUT---
DOCTOR STRANGE KNOWS ALL! ENTER!
SUDDENLY, A TALL, BROODING FIGURE APPEARS, WEARING A STRIKING AMULET AT HIS THROAT! THE COLD GREY EYES OF DR. STRANGE SEEM TO PIERCE THE MIST OF THE ROOM LIKE A KNIFE!
I-I HAD TO COME! I'M IN TROUBLE!
NATURALLY! ALL WHO COME TO ME ARE! SPEAK...
IT'S MY DREAMS! EVERY NIGHT I HAVE THE SAME DREAM---OVER AND OVER!! IT'S TERRIBLE! I CAN'T STAND IT!
CONTINUE...
IT'S ALWAYS THE SAME! A HAUNTING FIGURE, BOUND IN CHAINS APPEARS... IT STARES AT ME! IT NEVER STOPS! NEVER!
ENOUGH!
TONIGHT I SHALL VISIT YOU! I SHALL FIND THE ANSWER TO YOUR DREAM! NOW GO!
BUT HOW?? HOW WILL YOU DO IT?
...BY ENTERING YOUR DREAM!!!
!!!
LATER, ALONE IN HIS ROOM, DR. STRANGE SITS SILENTLY IN FRONT OF AN ANCIENT INCENSE BURNER, AS HIS PHYSICAL BODY GOES INTO AN EERIE TRANCE...
IT IS TIME FOR ME TO VISIT THE MASTER, FROM WHOM ALL MY POWERS STEM...
LIKE A FLEETING GHOST, HIS METAPHYSICAL SPIRIT LEAVES HIS MOTIONLESS BODY AND DRIFTS AWAY...
...BEING WITHOUT FORM OR SUBSTANCE, NOTHING CAN IMPEDE ITS FLIGHT! IT DRIFTS EFFORTLESSLY THRU THE BUILDING WALL..
...HIGH INTO THE SKY... ACROSS THE VAST OCEAN ...ACROSS THE CONTINENTS... CONQUERING ALL OF TIME AND SPACE IN ITS SILENT FLIGHT...

...UNTIL FINALLY, AT A HIDDEN TEMPLE SOMEWHERE IN THE REMOTE VASTNESS OF ASIA...

IT IS GOOD THAT YOU HAVE COME, MY SON! I SENSE DANGER SURROUNDING YOU! YOU MUST BE CAUTIOUS, FOR MY DAYS ARE NUMBERED, AND IT IS YOU WHO WILL SOME DAY TAKE MY PLACE IN THE BATTLE AGAINST THE FORCES OF DARKNESS AND EVIL!

I SHALL HEED YOUR WORDS, RESPECTED MASTER! I SHALL TRY TO PROVE WORTHY OF YOUR TRUST IN ME!
SO BE IT! NOW GO, FOR I AM WEARY! BUT MARK YOU WELL--SHOULD DANGER THREATEN, DEPEND UPON YOUR MAGIC AMULET!

THAT NIGHT, THOUSANDS OF MILES TO THE WEST, DR STRANGE, IN HIS MORTAL FORM AGAIN, VISITS THE MAN WHO HAS SOUGHT HIS HELP!
YOU MUST SLEEP NOW--AND HAVE NO FEAR! I SHALL BE NEARBY!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THERE IS ABOUT YOU, BUT IT GIVES A MAN A FEELING OF--CONFIDENCE!

MINUTES LATER...
SLEEP HAS OVERCOME HIM! HE BEGINS TO DREAM! IT IS TIME FOR ME TO ENTER MY TRANCE!

AND, AS HIS BODY GOES RIGID AND COLD, THE METAPHYSICAL SPIRIT OF DR STRANGE DRIFTS UPWARD, INTO THE VERY DREAM ITSELF WHICH UNFURLS BEFORE IT!

IT IS DESOLATE HERE--LONELY AND FORBODING! WAIT! SOMEONE BEGINS TO APPEAR!

NO! NO!! STAY AWAY! PLEASE--- STAY AWAY!

YOU! WHOEVER--WHATEVER YOU ARE--WHY DO YOU TORMENT HIM SO?
HE WELL KNOWS THE REASON WHY!

I AM THE SYMBOL OF EVIL! THE EVIL HE HAS DONE! THAT IS WHY I AM CHAINED SO! IF YOU DO NOT BELIEVE---ASK MR. CRANG!
SUDDENLY, ANOTHER FORM APPEARS---FAR MORE MENACING THAN THE FIRST!
SO! IT IS DR. STRANGE! YOU HAVE ENTERED THE DIMENSION OF DREAMS FOR THE LAST TIME! NEVER AGAIN SHALL YOU THWART ME!
NIGHTMARE--- MY ANCIENT FOE!
YOU KNOW THE RULES OF SORCERY, DR. STRANGE! THOSE WHO ENTER A HOSTILE DIMENSION MUST BE PREPARED TO PAY FOR IT--- WITH THEIR LIVES!
MEANWHILE, IN THE SEMI-DARK BEDROOM, THE SLEEPER AWAKES!
HE MENTIONED MR. CRANG! SO THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT! THERE'S DR. STRANGE! HE MUST HAVE HEARD IT ALL!
HE IS IN A TRANCE ---HELPLESS! IT'S JUST AS WELL! HE MUSTN'T BE ALLOWED TO LIVE WITH WHAT HE HAS LEARNED!
BEHOLD, DR. STRANGE--- YOU MAY WITNESS YOUR OWN DESTRUCTION! YOUR MORTAL BODY IS UNPROTECTED--- ITS LIFE IS ABOUT TO BE SNUFFED OUT!
NOTHING CAN SAVE YOU NOW!
THERE IS YET ONE WHO CAN! MASTER! HEAR ME! I NEED THEE, MASTER!!
AND, ACROSS THE LIMITLESS VOID OF TIME AND SPACE, TWO ANCIENT EARS HEAR THE DESPERATE CRY OF DR. STRANGE!
HE CALLS!
THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO HELP HIM--- THRU THE ENCHANTED AMULET! I MUST CONCENTRATE--- ---CONCENTRATE---

AND HALFWAY ACROSS THE WORLD, THE MYSTERIOUS GOLD AMULET ON DR. STRANGE'S CHEST BEGINS TO GLOW----- BRIGHTER, EVER BRIGHTER...
...UNTIL IT SLOWLY OPENS, REVEALING A FANTASTIC METAL EYE WITHIN...
AN EYE SUCH AS NO MORTAL HAS EVER BEHELD ...SUCH AS NO MORTAL WOULD EVER WANT TO BEHOLD AGAIN!
AND SUDDENLY, FROM THAT UNBLINKING ORB, A BLINDING HYPNOTIC RAY SHOOTS OUT, FREEZING THE AMAZED HUMAN TO THE SPOT, AS HIS LIMBS GROW STRANGELY RIGID!
AND, IN THAT SPLIT-SECOND, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE SUDDEN INTERRUPTION, DR. STRANGE DARTS PAST HIS ENEMY IN THE DREAM DIMENSION...
I MADE IT! I'M SAFE IN MY OWN DIMENSION!
YOU'VE ELUDED ME THIS TIME, BUT I'LL GET YOU YET!
AND, AS THE AWESOME AMULET LOSES ITS BLINDING RADIANCE, THE METAPHYSICAL SPIRIT OF DR. STRANGE ONCE AGAIN ENTERS HIS EARTHLY BODY!
I SHALL RELIEVE YOU OF BOTH YOUR WEAPON, AND YOUR HYPNOTIC SPELL! NOW SPEAK-- AND SPEAK ONLY THE TRUTH, I COMMAND YOU!
IT'S OVER! YOU'RE STILL ALIVE! THAT MEANS I'VE LOST!
I WAS A FOOL TO COME TO YOU - I DIDN'T SUSPECT MY DREAMS WERE CAUSED BY THE MANY MEN I'D RUINED IN BUSINESS! CRANG WAS THE LAST OF THEM! I ROBBED HIM--- BUT HE COULDN'T PROVE IT! NOW---NOW I'LL CONFESS...
IT WILL BE THE ONLY WAY YOU CAN EVER SLEEP AGAIN!
NEXT ISSUE:
EXPLORE THE MYSTIC WORLD OF BLACK MAGIC ONCE AGAIN WITH DOCTOR STRANGE AS YOUR GUIDE!

IN ANSWER TO AN AVALANCHE OF REQUESTS, WE PRESENT:

"THE ORIGIN OF Dr. STRANGE"

EDITOR'S NOTE:
IT COULD ONLY HAPPEN TO THE OFF-BEAT MARVEL COMICS GROUP! WITH THREE PUBLISHED STORIES OF DR. STRANGE ALREADY UNDER OUR BELTS, WE HAVE BEEN OVERWHELMED BY A FLOOD OF LETTERS REMINDING US THAT WE FORGOT ONE LITTLE DETAIL... WE FORGOT TO GIVE YOU HIS ORIGIN!
WELL, NEVER LET IT BE SAID THAT WE DON'T TRY TO CORRECT OUR NUTTY MISTAKES! STAN AND STEVE DROPPED EVERYTHING AND RUSHED THIS EXTRA-LONG 8-PAGER INTO PRODUCTION IN TIME FOR THIS ISH! IF THERE'S ANYTHING ELSE THEY'VE FORGOTTEN, DON'T TELL 'EM! THEY'RE OUT RESTING UP BY TRYING TO FINISH THE LATEST ISSUE OF "SPIDER-MAN" ON TIME!
AND NOW, HERE IT IS... THE ORIGIN OF THE MYSTERIOUS MASTER OF BLACK MAGIC...
WHERE DOES HE COME FROM?
HOW DID HE GET HIS POWERS?
WHO IS HE?
WRITTEN BY: STAN LEE
DRAWN BY: STEVE DITKO
LETTERED BY: S. ROSEN

COME WITH US TO INDIA, LAND OF MYSTIC ENCHANTMENT, WHERE WE FIND A HAGGARD FIGURE ENTERING A STRANGELY SILENT CHAMBER...
I'VE SEARCHED FOR MONTHS, BUT NOW AT LAST MY QUEST IS ENDED!
YOU! OLD MAN! ARE YOU THE ONE I SEEK? ARE YOU CALLED "THE ANCIENT ONE?
I AM THE ANCIENT ONE!
THEN YOU'RE THE ONE WITH THE MAGIC HEALING POWER! I NEED YOU! YOU HAVE TO HELP ME!
BE PATIENT, MAN OF THE WESTERN WORLD!
I HEAL NONE SAVE THOSE WHO DESERVE IT! THE POWER OF MY MAGIC MUST NEVER BE WASTED ON THE UNDESERVING! FIRST, YOU MUST PROVE YOU ARE WORTHY!
YOU CAN'T REFUSE ME! I WON'T LET YOU! I'VE TRAVELLED TOO FAR... WAITED TOO LONG...
STOP! I WILL PERMIT NO ACT OF VIOLENCE HERE! NONE MAY LIFT A HAND AGAINST THE ANCIENT ONE!
OH!! WHA--?
HE...HE IS HOLDING ME MOTIONLESS ABOVE THE GROUND... JUST BY A GESTURE! IT'S UNCANNY!
AND NOW I SHALL PEER INTO YOUR BRAIN ...INTO YOUR MEMORY... AND LEARN THE TRUTH ABOUT YOU!
I SEE YOU IN THE PAST...IN AMERICA...YOU ARE WEARING THE FROCK OF A DOCTOR! AHH, YOU WERE A FAMOUS SURGEON NAMED STEPHEN STRANGE!
"YOU WERE PROUD, HAUGHTY, SUCCESSFUL! BUT, YOU CARED LITTLE FOR YOUR FELLOW MEN..."
THE OPERATION WAS A SUCCESS, DOCTOR! YOUR PATIENT WANTS TO THANK YOU!
I CAN'T BE BOTHERED! JUST BE SURE HE PAYS HIS BILL!
"MONEY...THAT WAS ALL THAT INTERESTED YOU... ALL YOU CARED ABOUT..."
SORRY, IF YOU WON'T PAY MY PRICE, I CAN'T HELP YOU! FIND ANOTHER DOCTOR!

"TO YOU THE PROBLEMS OF OTHERS MEANT LESS THAN NOTHING!"
DR. STRANGE, WE NEED YOUR HELP ON OUR NEW MEDICAL RESEARCH PROJECT!
SORRY! I AM NOT INTERESTED IN CHARITY WORK!
BUT WITH YOUR SKILL, YOUR KNOWLEDGE, WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO FIND A CURE FOR... WAIT!! COME BACK!
WHEN YOU'RE WILLING TO PAY ME FOR MY TALENT, I WILL LISTEN! NOT UNTIL THEN! GOOD DAY!
"BUT WHAT IS THIS? THE SCENE NOW CHANGES! I SEE AN AUTO ACCIDENT, ON A LONELY ROAD! THE VICTIM IS ALIVE, BUT INJURED! THE VICTIM IS... YOU!!"
WE GOT HERE JUST IN TIME, JOE! CALL FOR AN AMBULANCE!
"YOU RECOVERED IN DUE TIME! YOUR LIFE WAS SPARED, BUT YOU SUFFERED A TERRIBLE BLOW..."
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO TELL YOU THIS...
SPEAK UP, MAN! I CAN TAKE IT! WHAT DO THE X-RAYS SHOW?
ALTHOUGH YOUR HANDS SEEM TO BE ALL RIGHT, THE NERVES HAVE BEEN SEVERELY DAMAGED!
YOU... YOU... MEAN...?
YES! YOU WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO PERFORM AN OPERATION AGAIN!
NO! NO!
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU! YOU'RE LYING! YOU MUST BE LYING!
"OTHERS TRIED TO HELP YOU, BUT YOU WERE TOO BITTER... TOO FULL OF PENT-UP SELF-PITY!"
EVEN THOUGH YOU CAN'T OPERATE, YOU CAN WORK AS A CONSULTANT.. AS MY ASSISTANT!
STEPHEN STRANGE ASSISTS NOBODY!
"AND SO YOU WENT INTO SECLUSION ...YOU SPENT YOUR DAYS BROODING, AS BITTERNESS FILLED YOUR SOUL!"
I MUST BE THE BEST... THE GREATEST!!! OR ELSE... NOTHING!
I'LL NEVER CONSENT TO WORK FOR ANYONE ELSE!
"YOU LOST TRACK OF TIME... YOU BECAME A DRIFTER... LITTLE MORE THAN A HUMAN DERELICT! AND THEN, ONE DAY, ON THE DOCKS, YOU OVERHEARD TWO SAILORS!"
YEAH, I HEARD OF THE ANCIENT ONE, ALSO! THEY SAY HE CAN CURE ANYTHING... BY SOME MAGIC POWER!
IF YOU ASK ME, HE'S JUST A LEGEND!

THE ANCIENT ONE!! MANY TIMES IN THE PAST I, TOO, HAVE HEARD THIS NAME MENTIONED IN LOW WHISPERS! CAN IT BE THAT THERE IS SOME TRUTH TO THE LEGENDS? HISTORY TELLS US THERE HAVE BEEN MEN WITH CERTAIN POWERS... WHAT IF HE IS SUCH A MAN?
THE REST IS EASY TO DEDUCE! YOU SOUGHT ME, FOR MY HEALING POWER! BUT I CANNOT HELP YOU... FOR YOUR MOTIVES ARE STILL SELFISH!
AND YET, I SEEM TO SEE A SPARK WITHIN YOU... A SPARK OF DECENCY... OF GOODNESS.. WHICH I MIGHT BE ABLE TO FAN INTO A FLAME!
IF YOU WILL STAY HERE... STUDY WITH ME... PERHAPS YOU WILL FIND WITHIN YOURSELF THE CURE YOU SEEK!
I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN! IT WAS JUST A WASTE OF TIME! YOU'RE NOTHING BUT AN OLD FRAUD!
YOUR LITTLE PARLOR TRICKS DON'T IMPRESS ME! I'M LEAVING! SAY... WHERE DID THAT SNOW COME FROM? IT WASN'T THERE BEFORE!! I COULD NEVER MAKE IT DOWN THE PASS NOW!
NO!...YOU WILL HAVE TO REMAIN UNTIL IT THAWS!
THAT SNOW ISN'T YOUR DOING, IS IT?? AW, WHAT AM I SAYING? PRETTY SOON, I'LL CONVINCE MYSELF YOU DO HAVE MAGIC POWERS!
NATURALLY, MAN OF THE WESTERN WORLD, YOU MUST NOT ALLOW YOURSELF TO BELIEVE IN MAGIC! IT WOULD BE... UNSEEMLY!
AND, NOW, INASMUCH AS YOU MUST REMAIN HERE UNTIL THE SNOW THAWS, MY PUPIL, MORDO, WILL SHOW YOU TO YOUR CHAMBER!
MORDO! WHAT A CREEPY-LOOKING CHARACTER!
ALL HE DOES IS STUDY THOSE MEANINGLESS SCROLLS AND RECITE HIS EMPTY DIRGES! WHAT A WASTE OF TIME!
I NEVER SHOULD HAVE COME HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE!
I'LL ASK THE OLD MAN IF HE KNOWS HOW LONG IT TAKES THE SNOW TO MELT AROUND HERE! HMM... LOOKS LIKE HE'S ASLEEP! SAY, WHAT'S THAT VAPOR SWIRLING AROUND HIM?
THE VAPORS OF VALTORR!! I AM BEING ATTACKED BY AN UNSEEN ENEMY!
THE VAPORS WERE SPAWNED BY BLACK MAGIC, AND ONLY BY BLACK MAGIC CAN THEY BE DISPELLED!

I SUMMON THE POWERS OF THE VISHANTI! BY THE SPELL OF THE DREAD DORMAMMU, IN THE NAME OF THE ALL-SEEING AGAMOTTO... ALL THY POWERS I SUMMON...
AT THAT VERY SPLIT-SECOND, IN A BLINDING FLASH OF LIGHT, THE SWIRLING VAPORS VANISH INTO NOTHINGNESS!
BEGONE, FORCES OF DARKNESS!!
IF I HADN'T SEEN IT, I'D NEVER HAVE BELIEVED IT!
I CANNOT EXPLAIN TO A NON-BELIEVER, BUT... I MUST ALWAYS BE ON MY GUARD... THE FORCES OF EVIL ARE EVER PITTED AGAINST ME!
WHAT WAS THAT? WHAT DID IT MEAN? WHAT FORCE DEFEATED IT?
LOOK, I'M NOT A SURGEON ANYMORE, BUT I'M STILL A DOCTOR! I CAN SEE THAT YOU'RE WEAK... ILL... YOU NEED REST!
IMPOSSIBLE! I MUST REMAIN... UNTIL I FIND A SUCCESSOR! THE EVIL FORCES MUST NOT BE ALLOWED HERE ON EARTH!
IF I STAY HERE MUCH LONGER, I'LL END UP BECOMING A BELIEVER!
I'VE GOT TO GET AWAY BEFORE I BECOME A PART OF ALL THIS MADNESS!!
THE SNOWS ARE ALMOST GONE! I'LL LEAVE NOW, AND... SAY, WHAT'S MORDO UP TO NOW?
DORMAMMU, ACCEPT MY INCENSE OFFERING!
LET THE FORCE OF YOUR POWER DESCEND UPON MY ENEMY! LET HIM FEEL YOUR FATAL TOUCH! I BESEECH YOU, DORMAMMU!
THAT DOLL SURROUNDED BY VAPOR! IT LOOKS FAMILIAR...
DORMAMMU, DO NOT FAIL ME!!
AH! THE PRYING STRANGER HAS FOUND ME! YOU WONDER WHAT IT IS I DO...
IT'S A REPLICA OF *THE ANCIENT ONE!*
THE ONE TRYING TO SLAY HIM IS HIS OWN PUPIL... *MORDO!*

I'LL TELL YOU, BECAUSE YOU ARE TOO WEAK TO STOP ME! I HAVE LEARNED MORE THAN THE ANCIENT ONE SUSPECTS, AND ONCE HE IS SLAIN, I SHALL BE THE ONLY MASTER OF BLACK MAGIC!
YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH IT, MORDO! I'LL TELL HIM... HE'LL TOSS YOU OUT!
FOOL! YOU THINK I AM HELPLESS? YOU THINK YOU CAN DEFEAT MY PLAN?! BEHOLD!!
SEE HOW EASILY I CAN CAST A SPELL UPON YOU... A SPELL WHICH WILL PREVENT YOU FROM EVER GIVING AWAY MY SECRET!
A VAPOR IS FORMING! FROM OUT OF NOWHERE! IT... IT'S COMING... TOWARDS ME!
IT'S FORMED ITSELF INTO AN IRON CLAMP AROUND MY MOUTH! I-I CANNOT SPEAK!
BUT WAIT!! IT..IT ISN'T REALLY THERE!! AND YET, I AM UNABLE TO SPEAK! SO... THERE IS SUCH A THING AS A MAGIC SPELL... AND THIS IS PROOF OF IT!
BUT, ALTHOUGH I CANNOT SPEAK, I CAN STILL MOVE! I'LL... WHA...?!!
HALT!! BY THE POWERS OF DARKNESS, I COMMAND YOU!
WEAK, UNKNOWING WESTERN DOG! HOW HELPLESS YOU ARE BEFORE THE MAGIC OF THE ANCIENTS!
AND NOW I SHALL FINISH WITH YOU!
THERE! NONE CAN SEE YOUR IRON CLAMP, OR THE FORCE THAT SURROUNDS YOUR WRISTS! BUT YOU FEEL THEM! YOU KNOW THEY ARE THERE!

LATER, AFTER MORDO HAS LEFT...
IT'S PROBABLY NOTHING MORE THAN SIMPLE HYPNOTISM!
I WON'T LET HIM STOP ME!
I'LL GO TO THE ANCIENT ONE AND... OWWW!! THOSE BOLTS OF PURE FORCE! THEY'RE TRAPPING ME!
IT WAS NO BLUFF! MORDO DOES POSSESS THE POWER OF BLACK MAGIC! BUT WHAT CAN I DO? I'VE GOT TO WARN THE ANCIENT ONE... GOT TO SAVE HIM... BUT NOW?
MORDO IS SPEAKING TO HIM NOW... AND THE ANCIENT ONE DOESN'T SUSPECT A THING!!
YOU HAVE SHOWN MUCH PROGRESS IN YOUR STUDIES, MY PUPIL! YOU HAVE MASTERED MANY OF THE MYSTIC ARTS!
THAT IS GOOD! FOR I AM EAGER TO FOLLOW IN YOUR HONORED FOOTSTEPS!
NO!! I'VE GOT TO WARN HIM!
LISTEN TO ME! I... UHH... OWW!
WHO DARES INTRUDE?
IT IS YOU! THE WITLESS BLUNDERER FROM THE FAR WESTERN CONTINENT! IF YOU HAVE WORDS TO UTTER, SPEAK!
HE KNOWS I CANNOT! HIS SPELL IS STOPPING ME!
SEND HIM BACK TO THE NEW WORLD, ANCIENT ONE! THERE IS NO PLACE FOR HIM HERE!
HOW SMUG HE IS! HE KNOWS I CANNOT EXPOSE HIM! NEVER HAVE I HATED ANYONE SO MUCH!
AND SO, ALONE AND HELPLESS, DR. STEPHEN STRANGE STANDS ...AND BROODS...
NOW AT LAST I SEE THE POWER OF SORCERY! I CANNOT GIVE UP! THE EVIL MORDO MUST NEVER BE ALLOWED TO DEFEAT THE ANCIENT ONE! FOR IF HE SHOULD, WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT?

I AM ONLY SUBJECT TO MORDO'S SPELL IF I TRY TO WARN THE ANCIENT ONE! YET, I AM ABLE TO SPEAK OF OTHER MATTERS... SO THERE IS STILL ONE HOPE!
IF I, TOO, CAN LEARN THE SECRETS OF BLACK MAGIC, THEN I CAN BATTLE MORDO WITH HIS OWN WEAPONS!
ANCIENT ONE, I CRAVE A BOON! I WISH TO ACCEPT THE TERMS YOU OFFERED ME SOME DAYS AGO! I WISH TO STUDY AT YOUR FEET... TO BE TAUGHT YOUR KNOWLEDGE... TO PROVE MYSELF WORTHY OF THE MYSTIC ARTS!
AHH! AT LAST I HAVE REACHED THE REAL DR. STRANGE!
I KNEW THAT THERE WAS GOOD WITHIN YOU... IF I COULD BUT BRING IT TO THE SURFACE! I ACCEPT YOU, MY SON! YOU SHALL BE MY DISCIPLE!
FIRST, I RELEASE YOU FROM MORDO'S SPELL... SO! NOW YOU ARE FREE TO SPEAK, TO ACT, EVEN AS BEFORE!
YOU... YOU KNEW OF MORDO'S SPELL?!!
OF COURSE! THE PUPIL CAN HAVE NO SECRETS FROM HIS MASTER! BUT, ALTHOUGH HE IS EVIL, I PREFER TO KEEP MORDO HERE WHERE I CAN CONTROL HIM, RATHER THAN BANISH HIM! ONE DAY, MY SON, WHEN I AM GONE, IT WILL BE YOUR TASK TO BATTLE MORDO... TO THE FINISH!
YOU HAVE BEEN TESTED, AND YOU HAVE PASSED YOUR BAPTISM OF FIRE! BUT THE PATH AHEAD OF YOU WILL BE DIFFICULT, AND FRAUGHT WITH DANGER! DO YOU STILL WISH TO CONTINUE?
I DO, ANCIENT ONE!
AND SO IT BEGAN! THE DAYS TURNED TO WEEKS, TO MONTHS, TO YEARS, AS DR. STRANGE STUDIED THE LONG-DEAD MYSTIC ARTS! SLOWLY HE CHANGED... SLOWLY HIS LIFE TOOK ON A NEW DEEPER MEANING... SLOWLY HE PREPARED HIMSELF FOR THE EPIC BATTLES AHEAD, THE BATTLES WHICH COULD ONLY BE WON BY DR. STRANGE, MASTER OF BLACK MAGIC!
AND THERE YOU HAVE IT! IT HAS TAKEN FOUR ISSUES FOR US TO REACH THIS POINT, BUT, LIKE DR. STRANGE, WE ARE READY AT LAST... READY TO BEGIN THE MOST MYSTIC ADVENTURES OF ALL TIME! SO BE SURE YOU ARE WITH US NEXT ISSUE AND SEE FOR YOURSELF THAT OUR TALES-TO-COME WERE WELL WORTH WAITING FOR!
The End

Finally, we leap a mere three years ahead in an effort to bring you a somewhat more updated Dr. Strange. There have been so many different artists involved with this ever-changing series that it's not too easy to make a choice, but let's zero in on a tale that was printed in 1966 and illustrated by Marvel's magnificent maiden-in-residence, the fantastically versatile Marie Severin.

By the time the strip you're about to read was presented to a passionately panting populace, the saga of Dr. Strange had grown wilder and wilder, encompassing alien worlds, strange new dimensions, and characters such as Umar, sorceress supreme, sister of the dread Dormammu. And let us never overlook Doc's constantly menaced gal friend, Clea, whom he had originally rescued from some dizzy dimension or other. In the epic episode which follows, our hero battles the unspeakable Umar as the venerable Ancient One does his thaumaturgical thing while cheering him on from the sidelines.

It's magical, it's mystical, it's slightly maniacal, but if you scrutinize each fateful incantation—if you dare to read between the enchanted lines—mayhap you'll stumble upon some deep and dazzling long-buried secret revelations. But, if you do, promise not to tell a soul. You never know when Dormammu might be listening.

Dr. STRANGE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS!

"THE FEARFUL FINISH...!"

LAST ISSUE, OUR STARTLED EYES BEHELD THE UNSPEAKABLE *UMAR* AS SHE HURLED A SPELL OF *DEATH* ACROSS THE INFINITE VOID TO WHERE *CLEA* IS IMPRISONED!

BUT, EVEN AS THE DEADLY BLAST HURTLES TOWARDS ITS HELPLESS VICTIM, A DESPERATE *DR. STRANGE* ALSO MOVES WITH THE SPEED OF THOUGHT--

WE URGE YOU TO READ THIS AWESOME ANNOUNCEMENT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, O TRUE BELIEVER--

A MYSTICAL MARVEL MASTERWORK, BY:

STAN LEE and **MARIE SEVERIN**

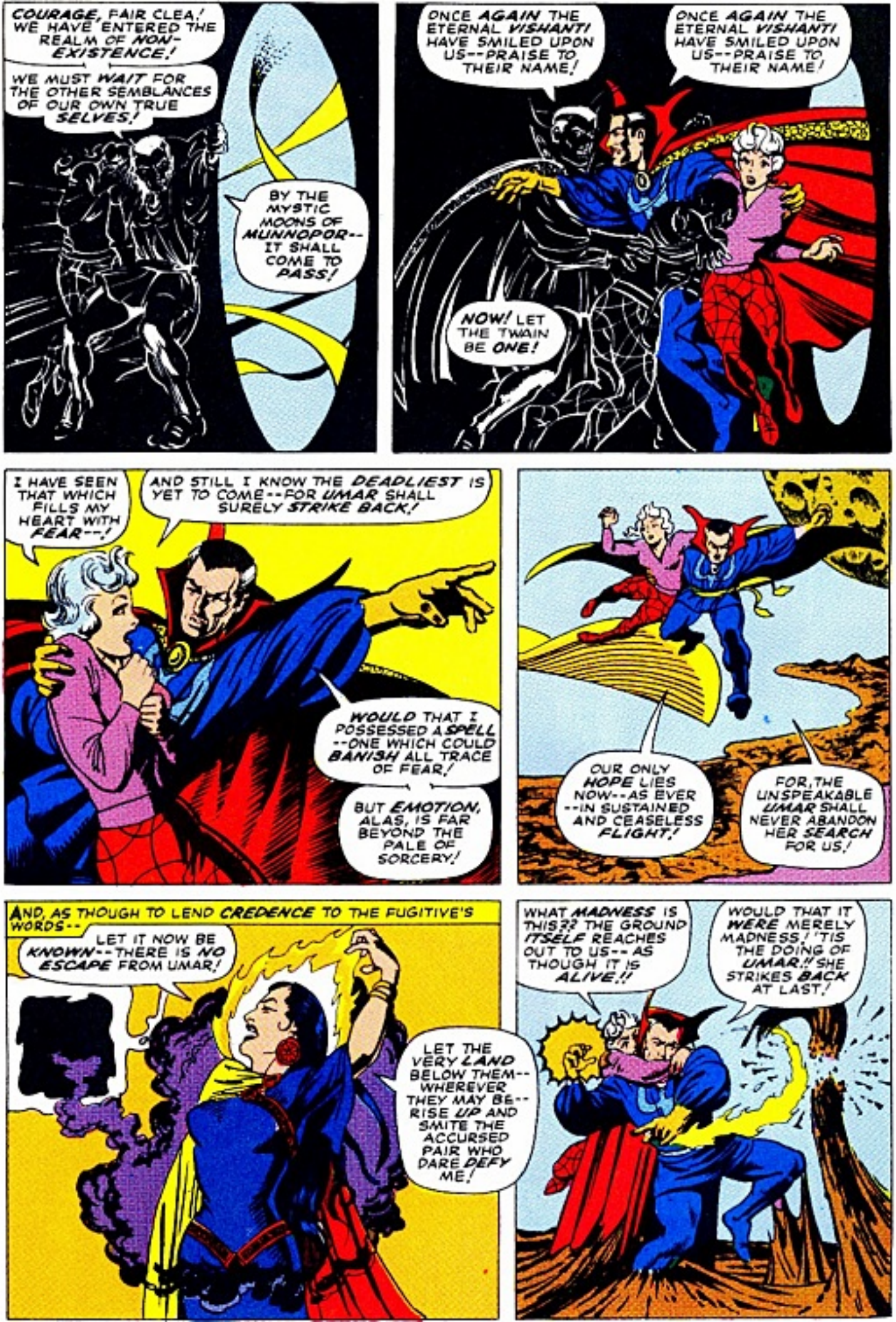
LETTERED BY: **ARTIE SIMEK**

--BECAUSE A WEALTH OF ENTHRALLING ENCHANTMENT AWAITS THEE, AND NOT A WONDROUS WORD IS TO BE MISSED...!

BY THE VAPORS OF VALTORR WHEREIN THE NAMELESS DWELL--
BY THE ROVING RINGS OF RAGGADORR, LET MY SPEED EXCEED HER SPELL!
SHE IS NOW WITHIN MY SIGHT!
SO SWIFTLY DO I MOVE THAT SHE IS SUSPENDED IN TIME!
AND, AT THE DANK AND DEADLY CASTLE OF UMAR--
MY SPELL IS CAST!
AND, THUS DIES CLEA!
BUT-- WHAT IS THIS?
STRANGE IS GONE--AND IN HIS STEAD-- NAUGHT BUT A DIM VIBRATION!
THE VALTORR BE PRAISED! I HAVE REACHED MY GOAL!
AND NOW-- WHILST TIME IS STILLED--
THE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS SHALL RECEIVE THE FATE FOR WHICH CLEA WAS SO MERCILESSLY INTENDED!
FOR, ONLY I POSSESS THE KNOWLEDGE-- ONLY I POSSESS THE POWER--ONLY I POSSESS THE CONSUMMATE SKILL--TO WITHSTAND SO DEADLY A BLOW--AND SUMMARILY REPEL IT!
THUS, IN THE NAME OF THE ANCIENT ONE, MOST VENERATED--
LET THAT WHICH IS, BE NOT! LET THAT WHICH WAS, LIVE ON! LET CLEA BE FORGOT! REVERSE THY COURSE! BEGONE!

THUS, WITHIN THE SPACE OF THE SAME HEARTBEAT--
MY SPELL RETURNS--TO MENACE ME!
BY THE DEMONS OF DARKNESS--IN THE NAME OF SATANNISH--BY THE FLAMES OF THE FALTINE--LET ITS DEADLY STING VANISH!
I WAS ABLE TO SAVE MYSELF FROM THE DOOM WHICH MIGHT HAVE BEEN MINE--
NEVER BEFORE HAS UMAR BEEN THUS FOILED! 'TIS THE DOING OF THE ACCURSED DR. STRANGE!
BUT, THE FORCE OF IMPACT HAS WEAKENED ME! I AM STUNNED!
HE SHALL PAY FOR THIS INDIGNITY! BY ALL THE DEMONS OF DANAK--HOW HE SHALL PAY!
AND, AT THE EDGE OF THE DREAD DIMENSION--IN A PLACE WHICH IS LESS THAN PLACE--A TIME WHICH IS MORE THAN TIME--
I HAVE FOUND YOU, AT LAST! BUT, THERE IS NO TIME FOR REJOICING--
THE SISTER OF DORMAMMU WILL SOON BE UPON US--
AND HERE, IN THIS WORLD WHICH LIES BEYOND THE FURTHEST REACH OF MORTAL KEN--HERE UMAR IS TRULY SUPREME!
NEVER HAS MORTAL BEING SURVIVED SUCH DEADLY POWER FOR SO LONG!
BUT, IF YOU DO NOT FLEE, YOUR PAST TRIUMPHS SHALL AVAIL YOU NOTHING!
'TIS AS YOU SAY--UMAR IS SUPREME!
THERE IS WISDOM TO YOUR WORDS! ONLY IN FLIGHT MAY SURVIVAL BE FOUND!
BUT, I WELL REMEMBER WHY YOU INCURRED THE WRATH OF DORMAMMU--AND THE SISTER OF DORMAMMU!
T'WAS BECAUSE YOU DARED SAVE THE LIFE OF THIS MORTAL STRANGER!*
BUT, 'TIS HOPELESS! I AM ALREADY DOOMED!
NO! NOT WHILE I STILL LIVE!
*WE'RE SURE ALL LOYAL NECROMANCERS WILL REMEMBER THE EXACT ISH, MANY MONTHS AGO, WHEN IT HAPPENED!--NOW, IF ONLY WE COULD REMEMBER! --SHAMEFACED STAN.
I MUST BRING YOU TO EARTH--WHERE UMAR SHALL NEVER FIND YOU AGAIN!
BUT, I DO NOT POSSESS YOUR POWER! WITH ME, YOU WILL BE FORCED TO CROSS THE FORBIDDEN DIMENSIONS--THRU WHICH NONE MAY SURVIVE!
IF THE RISK IS GREAT--THE GOAL IS GREATER! WE ESCAPE TOGETHER--OR SO WE PERISH!

THEN BEGINS A JOURNEY--SO MYSTIFYING--SO INCOMPREHENSIBLE--SO UTTERLY BEYOND OUR POOR POWERS OF DESCRIPTION--THAT WE CAN ONLY DEPICT THE RAREST DETAILS THRU THE USE OF MERE MORTAL ILLUSTRATION--
I SHALL CLASP YOUR HAND IN MINE!
SO LONG AS THE SLIGHTEST PHYSICAL CONTACT EXISTS BETWEEN US--MY STRENGTH--MY OCCULT POWER--SHALL BE YOUR SHIELD!
BUT, SPEED IS OF THE ESSENCE! WHATEVER BEFALLS--DO NOT LOOK BACK!
BY THE SECRETS OF THE SERAPHIM, WE SHALL TRAVEL FASTER THAN ANY LIVING BEING HAS TRAVELLED BEFORE!
IF OUR SPEED IS GREAT ENOUGH, WE MAY ELUDE THE DANGERS THAT AWAIT!
BUT, SUDDENLY--
THE ONE THING I DID NOT PREPARE FOR--!
WE'VE CREATED A DREADED, INTER-DIMENSIONAL ROAD OF REPETITION!
IT MUST SOMEHOW BE SHATTERED... WE'LL CONTINUALLY REPEAT OUR ACTION--THRUOUT ETERNITY!
IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO STOP--OR TO TURN BACK--!
BUT, IF WE COLLIDE WITH OUR APPROACHING OTHER SELVES--THEN ALL IS LOST!
I DARE NOT USE MY CLOAK OF LEVITATION--FOR, ONCE OFF THE ROAD--WE MAY DRIFT IN LIMBO FOREVER!
THEREFORE--LET THE AWESOME GLEAM OF MY ENCHANTED AMULET SEVER THE DEADLY BAND BEFORE US--!
FZZZAP!
IT IS DONE!
BUT, WHAT NEW MYSTIC MENACE NOW CONFRONTS US?


COURAGE, FAIR CLEA! WE HAVE ENTERED THE REALM OF NON-EXISTENCE!
WE MUST WAIT FOR THE OTHER SEMBLANCES OF OUR OWN TRUE SELVES!
BY THE MYSTIC MOONS OF MUNNOPOR--IT SHALL COME TO PASS!
ONCE AGAIN THE ETERNAL VISHANTI HAVE SMILED UPON US--PRAISE TO THEIR NAME!
ONCE AGAIN THE ETERNAL VISHANTI HAVE SMILED UPON US--PRAISE TO THEIR NAME!
NOW! LET THE TWAIN BE ONE!
I HAVE SEEN THAT WHICH FILLS MY HEART WITH FEAR--!
AND STILL I KNOW THE DEADLIEST IS YET TO COME--FOR UMAR SHALL SURELY STRIKE BACK!
WOULD THAT I POSSESSED A SPELL --ONE WHICH COULD BANISH ALL TRACE OF FEAR!
BUT EMOTION, ALAS, IS FAR BEYOND THE PALE OF SORCERY!
OUR ONLY HOPE LIES NOW--AS EVER --IN SUSTAINED AND CEASELESS FLIGHT!
FOR, THE UNSPEAKABLE UMAR SHALL NEVER ABANDON HER SEARCH FOR US!
AND, AS THOUGH TO LEND CREDENCE TO THE FUGITIVE'S WORDS--
LET IT NOW BE KNOWN--THERE IS NO ESCAPE FROM UMAR!
LET THE VERY LAND BELOW THEM--WHEREVER THEY MAY BE--RISE UP AND SMITE THE ACCURSED PAIR WHO DARE DEFY ME!
WHAT MADNESS IS THIS?? THE GROUND ITSELF REACHES OUT TO US--AS THOUGH IT IS ALIVE!!
WOULD THAT IT WERE MERELY MADNESS! 'TIS THE DOING OF UMAR!! SHE STRIKES BACK AT LAST!

BUT, YOU MUST NOT FALL PREY TO DESPAIR! MY SPELLS SHALL--CLEA!!
I AM UNDONE!! SAVE YOURSELF, MY GALLANT ONE! LET US BOTH NOT PERISH!

NEITHER YOU NOR I SHALL BE UMAR'S VICTIM--SO LONG AS ENCHANTMENT ENDURES!
LET THE FIERY FLAMES OF THE FALTINE FREE YOU OF YOUR SUDDEN BONDAGE!!
LET THAT WHICH I ORDAIN NOW COME TO PASS!
THE GROUND RELEASES ME!! I AM FREE ONCE MORE!

BUT, THE JOURNEY IS TOO FAR--AND THE EVIL ARM OF UMAR REACHES EVERYWHERE THRUOUT THE DARK DIMENSIONS!
IS IT TRULY HOPELESS? HAS THE GAME FINALLY ENDED--WITH UMAR TRIUMPHANT?
NOT YET, MY FAIR ONE, NOT YET!

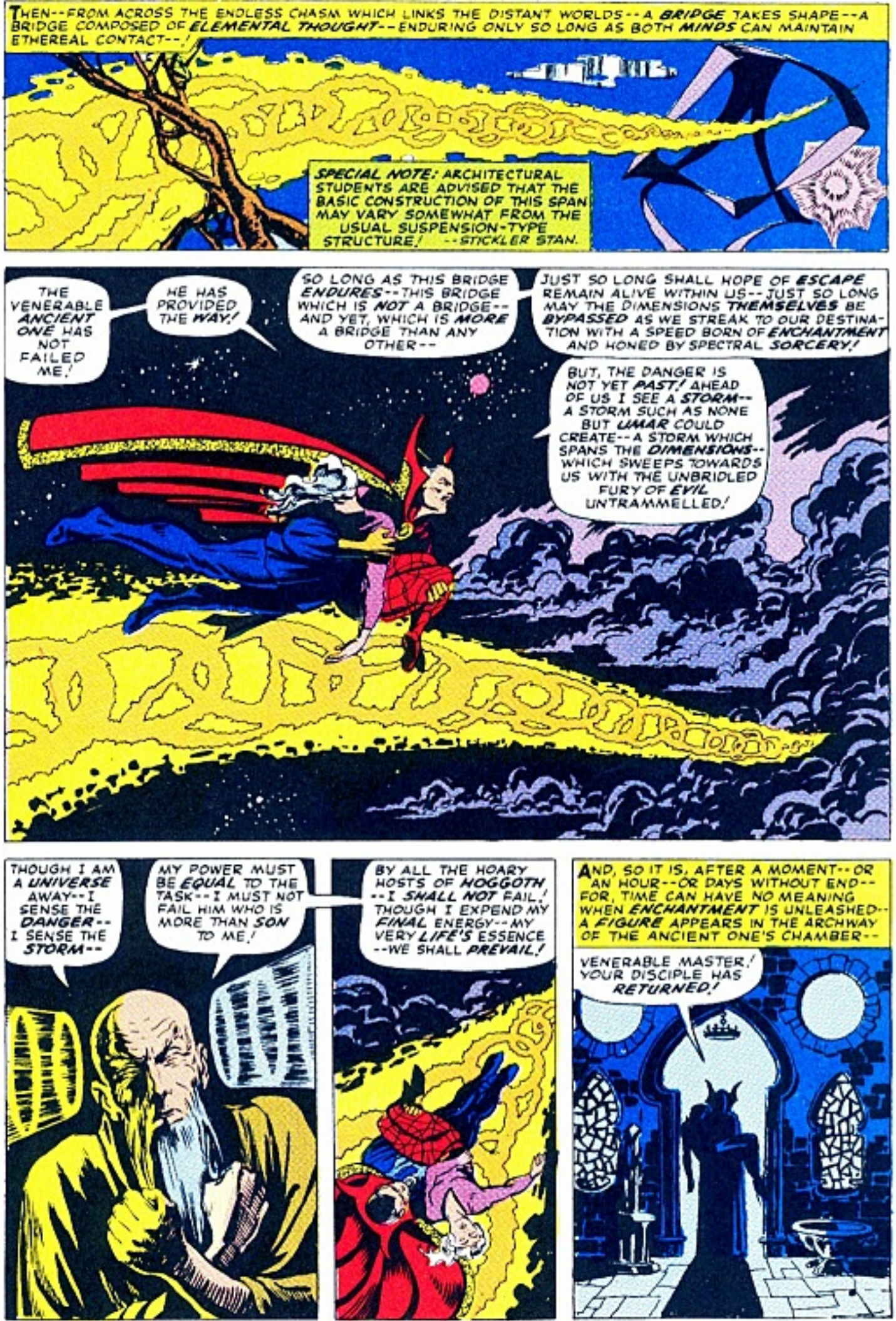
LET THERE BE SILENCE ABSOLUTE--AS I SEND A VITAL THOUGHT THRUOUT THE ENDLESS VOID--!

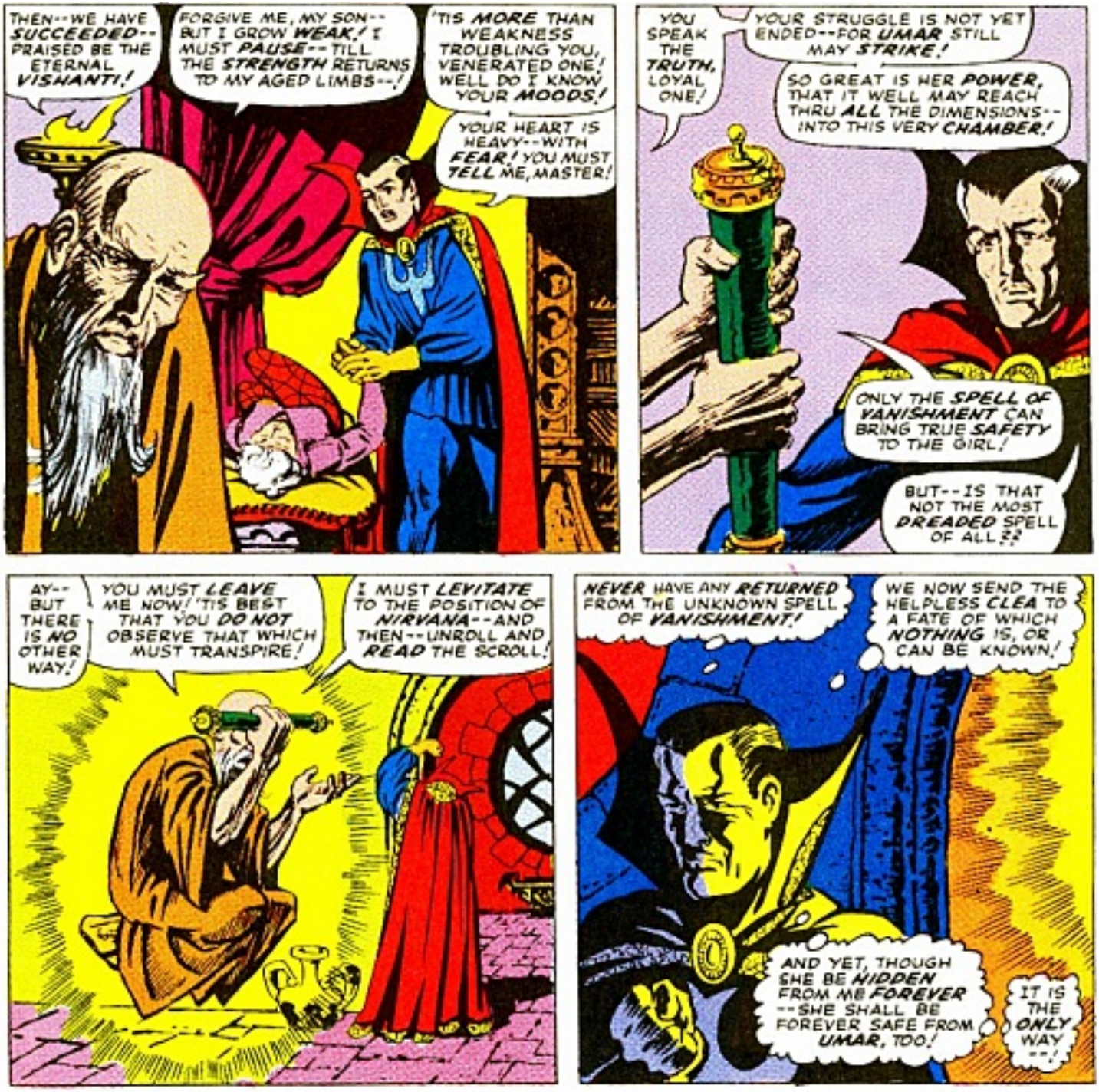
FOR NOTHING MAY MATCH THE SPEED OF THOUGHT--NOTHING MAY HALT IT--ONCE BEGUN!

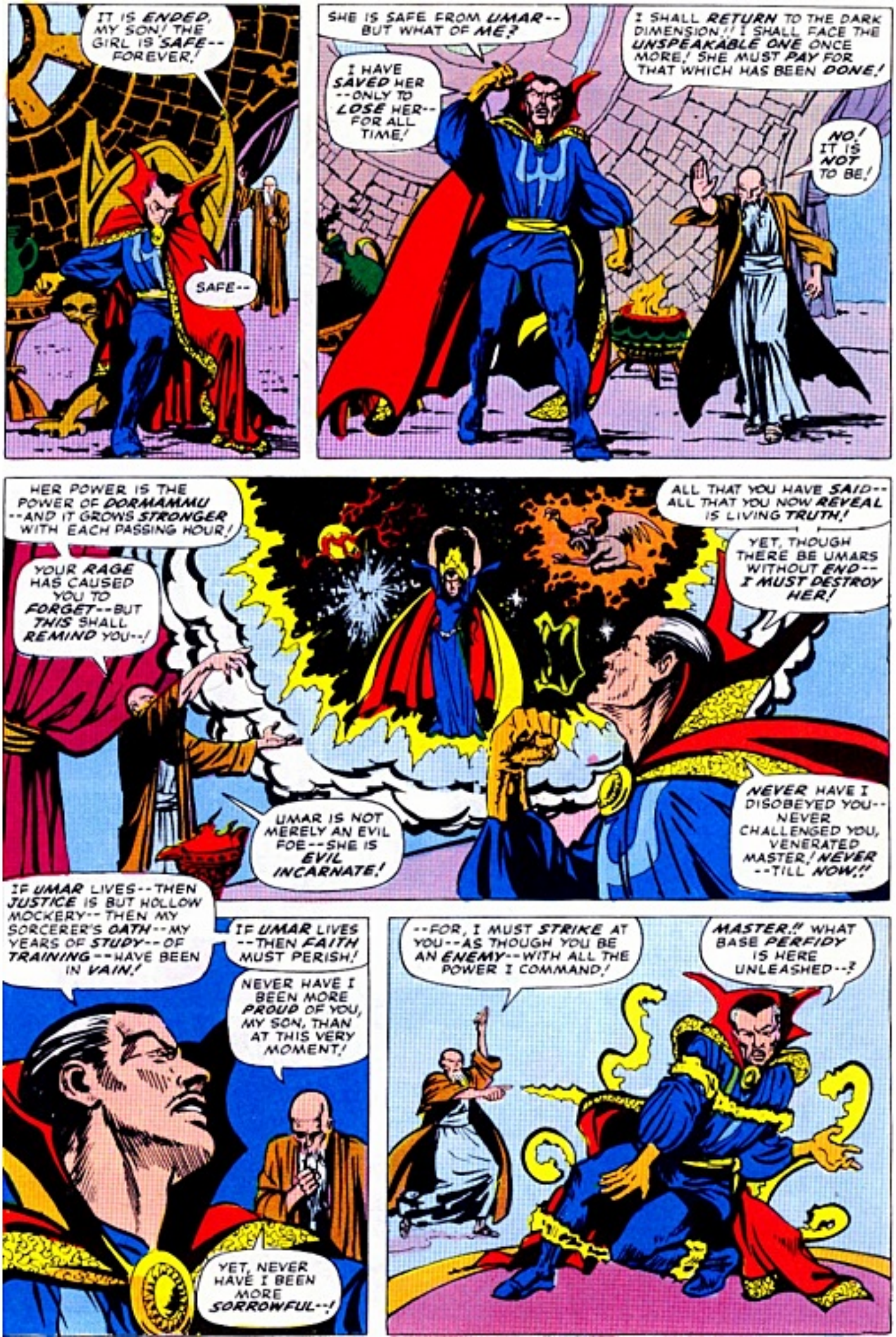
AND, IN THE SILENT SANCTUM OF THE ANCIENT ONE--BEYOND THE THRALL OF TIME AND SPACE--ON THE MORTAL PLANE OF EARTH--
A VOICE--WHICH IS NOT A VOICE--CALLS TO TO ME--FROM DISTANCE WITHOUT MEASURE!
'TIS A SUMMONS FROM MY TRUE DISCIPLE--FROM HIM WHO IS VERILY WITHOUT PEER!

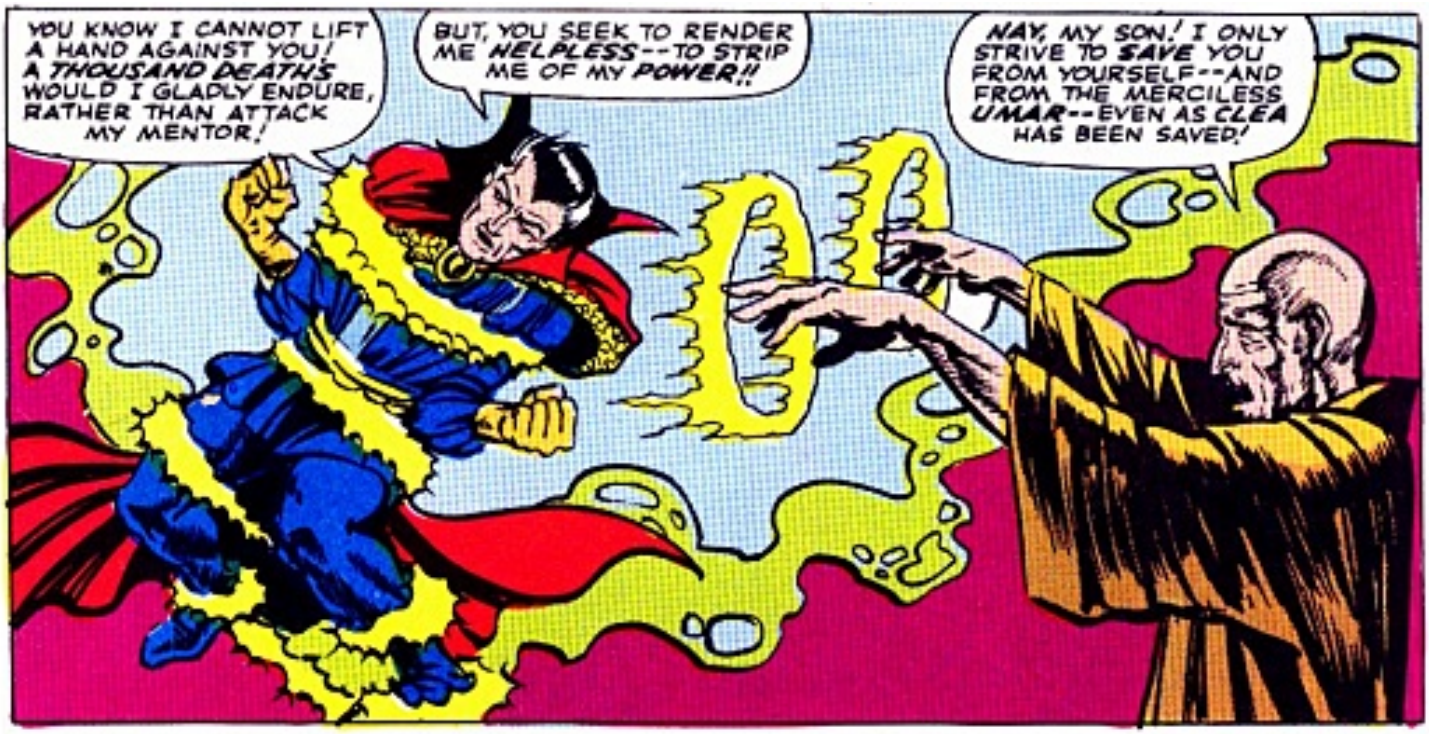
MY VERY BRAIN REELS AT THE AURA OF DANGER WHICH I DO SENSE!
MORE!! I MUST LEARN MORE!

ENOUGH!! 'TIS NOW MOST CRYSTAL CLEAR!
BURDENED BY THE FEMALE, CLEA, HIS FLIGHT FROM THE DREADED DARK DIMENSION IS IMPERILED!
BUT--IF HIS POWER WERE TO COMBINE WITH MINE--A WAY MIGHT BE FOUND!


THEN--FROM ACROSS THE ENDLESS CHASM WHICH LINKS THE DISTANT WORLDS--A BRIDGE TAKES SHAPE--A BRIDGE COMPOSED OF ELEMENTAL THOUGHT--ENDURING ONLY SO LONG AS BOTH MINDS CAN MAINTAIN ETHEREAL CONTACT--!
SPECIAL NOTE: ARCHITECTURAL STUDENTS ARE ADVISED THAT THE BASIC CONSTRUCTION OF THIS SPAN MAY VARY SOMEWHAT FROM THE USUAL SUSPENSION-TYPE STRUCTURE! --STICKLER STAN.
THE VENERABLE ANCIENT ONE HAS NOT FAILED ME!
HE HAS PROVIDED THE WAY!
SO LONG AS THIS BRIDGE ENDURES--THIS BRIDGE WHICH IS NOT A BRIDGE--AND YET, WHICH IS MORE A BRIDGE THAN ANY OTHER--
JUST SO LONG SHALL HOPE OF ESCAPE REMAIN ALIVE WITHIN US--JUST SO LONG MAY THE DIMENSIONS THEMSELVES BE BYPASSED AS WE STREAK TO OUR DESTINATION WITH A SPEED BORN OF ENCHANTMENT AND HONED BY SPECTRAL SORCERY!
BUT, THE DANGER IS NOT YET PAST! AHEAD OF US I SEE A STORM--A STORM SUCH AS NONE BUT UMAR COULD CREATE--A STORM WHICH SPANS THE DIMENSIONS--WHICH SWEEPS TOWARDS US WITH THE UNBRIDLED FURY OF EVIL UNTRAMMELLED!
THOUGH I AM A UNIVERSE AWAY--I SENSE THE DANGER--I SENSE THE STORM--
MY POWER MUST BE EQUAL TO THE TASK--I MUST NOT FAIL HIM WHO IS MORE THAN SON TO ME!
BY ALL THE HOARY HOSTS OF HOGGOTH--I SHALL NOT FAIL! THOUGH I EXPEND MY FINAL ENERGY--MY VERY LIFE'S ESSENCE--WE SHALL PREVAIL!
AND, SO IT IS, AFTER A MOMENT--OR AN HOUR--OR DAYS WITHOUT END--FOR, TIME CAN HAVE NO MEANING WHEN ENCHANTMENT IS UNLEASHED--A FIGURE APPEARS IN THE ARCHWAY OF THE ANCIENT ONE'S CHAMBER--
VENERABLE MASTER! YOUR DISCIPLE HAS RETURNED!


THEN--WE HAVE SUCCEEDED--PRAISED BE THE ETERNAL VISHANTI!
FORGIVE ME, MY SON--BUT I GROW WEAK! I MUST PAUSE--TILL THE STRENGTH RETURNS TO MY AGED LIMBS--!
'TIS MORE THAN WEAKNESS TROUBLING YOU, VENERATED ONE! WELL DO I KNOW YOUR MOODS!
YOUR HEART IS HEAVY--WITH FEAR! YOU MUST TELL ME, MASTER!
YOU SPEAK THE TRUTH, LOYAL ONE!
YOUR STRUGGLE IS NOT YET ENDED--FOR UMAR STILL MAY STRIKE!
SO GREAT IS HER POWER, THAT IT WELL MAY REACH THRU ALL THE DIMENSIONS--INTO THIS VERY CHAMBER!
ONLY THE SPELL OF VANISHMENT CAN BRING TRUE SAFETY TO THE GIRL!
BUT--IS THAT NOT THE MOST DREADED SPELL OF ALL??
AY--BUT THERE IS NO OTHER WAY!
YOU MUST LEAVE ME NOW! 'TIS BEST THAT YOU DO NOT OBSERVE THAT WHICH MUST TRANSPIRE!
I MUST LEVITATE TO THE POSITION OF NIRVANA--AND THEN--UNROLL AND READ THE SCROLL!
NEVER HAVE ANY RETURNED FROM THE UNKNOWN SPELL OF VANISHMENT!
WE NOW SEND THE HELPLESS CLEA TO A FATE OF WHICH NOTHING IS, OR CAN BE KNOWN!
AND YET, THOUGH SHE BE HIDDEN FROM ME FOREVER--SHE SHALL BE FOREVER SAFE FROM UMAR, TOO!
IT IS THE ONLY WAY--!
SOFTLY, WITH QUIVERING LIPS AND TREMBLING VOICE, THE VENERABLE ANCIENT ONE INTONES THE FATEFUL SPELL OF VANISHMENT--A SPELL WE OURSELVES DARE NOT REVEAL UPON THIS PAGE--
SO FINAL--SO IRREVOCABLE IS THE DREADED INCANTATION, THAT IT CAN BE USED BUT ONCE--FOR, EVEN AS THE CHANT IS ENDED, THE PARCHMENT ITSELF FOLLOWS THE GIRL--FOLLOWS HER TO--THE ETERNAL UNKNOWN--!


IT IS ENDED, MY SON! THE GIRL IS SAFE--FOREVER!
SAFE--
SHE IS SAFE FROM UMAR--BUT WHAT OF ME?
I HAVE SAVED HER--ONLY TO LOSE HER--FOR ALL TIME!
I SHALL RETURN TO THE DARK DIMENSION!! I SHALL FACE THE UNSPEAKABLE ONE ONCE MORE! SHE MUST PAY FOR THAT WHICH HAS BEEN DONE!
NO! IT IS NOT TO BE!
HER POWER IS THE POWER OF DORMAMMU--AND IT GROWS STRONGER WITH EACH PASSING HOUR!
YOUR RAGE HAS CAUSED YOU TO FORGET--BUT THIS SHALL REMIND YOU--!
ALL THAT YOU HAVE SAID--ALL THAT YOU NOW REVEAL IS LIVING TRUTH!
YET, THOUGH THERE BE UMARS WITHOUT END--I MUST DESTROY HER!
UMAR IS NOT MERELY AN EVIL FOE--SHE IS EVIL INCARNATE!
NEVER HAVE I DISOBEYED YOU--NEVER CHALLENGED YOU, VENERATED MASTER! NEVER--TILL NOW!!
IF UMAR LIVES--THEN JUSTICE IS BUT HOLLOW MOCKERY--THEN MY SORCERER'S OATH--MY YEARS OF STUDY--OF TRAINING--HAVE BEEN IN VAIN!
IF UMAR LIVES--THEN FAITH MUST PERISH!
NEVER HAVE I BEEN MORE PROUD OF YOU, MY SON, THAN AT THIS VERY MOMENT!
YET, NEVER HAVE I BEEN MORE SORROWFUL--!
--FOR, I MUST STRIKE AT YOU--AS THOUGH YOU BE AN ENEMY--WITH ALL THE POWER I COMMAND!
MASTER!! WHAT BASE PERFIDY IS HERE UNLEASHED--?


YOU KNOW I CANNOT LIFT A HAND AGAINST YOU! A THOUSAND DEATHS WOULD I GLADLY ENDURE, RATHER THAN ATTACK MY MENTOR!
BUT, YOU SEEK TO RENDER ME HELPLESS--TO STRIP ME OF MY POWER!!
NAY, MY SON! I ONLY STRIVE TO SAVE YOU FROM YOURSELF--AND FROM THE MERCILESS UMAR--EVEN AS CLEA HAS BEEN SAVED!

YOU CANNOT SUBJECT ME TO THE SPELL OF VANISHMENT--FOR THE MYSTIC SCROLL IS YOURS NO MORE!
CAN THE MADNESS BE UPON HIM? HAS THE WEIGHT OF YEARS NOW STRIPPED HIM OF ALL REASON?

I SEND YOU NOT TO THE NAMELESS NOWHERE WHICH HAS SINCE CLAIMED CLEA!
BUT, AS THE OMNIPOTENT OSHTUR IS MY JUDGE, YOU MAY NOT REMAIN WITHIN THIS SPHERE!
BUT, WHY? NEVER HAVE YOU ACTED WITHOUT GOOD REASON! WHAT REASON HAVE YOU NOW?
THERE IS BARELY TIME TO SPEAK OF IT--AND YET--

--IT IS ONLY FITTING THAT YOU KNOW!
IF YOU REMAIN WITHIN THIS CHAMBER--INDEED, WITHIN THIS VERY UNIVERSE--YOU WOULD SURELY PERISH!!
FOR, ONLY NOW CAN I SAFELY TELL YOU--
UMAR WALKS THE EARTH!
CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE!

EPILOGUE

And there you have it. The burgeoning beginning of the cultural revolution which academicians throughout the globe so fondly refer to as The Marvel Age of Comics.

But we've had only time enough barely to cover Phase One. Naught but the tip of the titannic Marvel iceberg has been thus far revealed. In the years that followed, in the titles yet to come, some of the greatest names in comicdom were to be imperishably inscribed in the Marvel Hall of Fame—names of artists like Colan, Buscema, Heck, Steranko, Kane, Mooney, Smith, Tuska, Adams, Ploog, Starlin, Buckler, and others who'll kill me because I didn't have room to mention them.

And let us never forget the cataclysmically creative writers and editors to whom the torch was passed, and who carried it to still greater heights of literary glory. What faithful fan's heart does not beat faster at hearing the name of award-winning writer/editor Roy Thomas? Who among us has not thrilled to the tales of Gerry Conway, Marv Wolfman, Gary Friedrich, Steve Englehart, Len Wein, or Steve Gerber? And who would fain deny proper homage to the still newer breed, to such as Isabella, McGregor, Clairmont, and Moench? The world of fantasy will never perish while such as they endure.

Indeed, if I were to list just a fraction of those responsible for the early growth, the grandeur, the glory of Marvel, Asgard itself would wither and crumble were I to omit Sol Brodsky, John Verpoorten, Flo Steinberg, or the recently departed and so much missed Syd Shores and Bill Everett.

In fact, the more I seek to frame a final paragraph, the more I realize that the origin of Marvel Comics has really just begun. There's so much more to tell, so many sagas and heroes we haven't even hinted at—so many wonderful people whose names we've barely mentioned, whose accomplishments are still to be told.

Therefore, let's not consider this a conclusion. Let's rather call it a beginning, the beginning of an ever-continuing journey into the realm of Marvel mythology—a realm where all, regardless of color, sex, or creed, are truly kindred souls, united by a common love of adventure, fantasy, and just plain fun. Perhaps, just perhaps, that's what Marvel's really all about.

Excelsior!

Marvel presents the origins and history of its most famous creations, narrated by Stan (the Man) Lee, that stellar storyman who saw comics as more than dime-store material and turned his characters into 20th-century mythology.

Included are the beginnings of The Fantastic Four, which hurled Marvel out of the era of monsters without soul into the age of cosmic heroes; The Hulk, brilliant scientist turned muddled monster; Spider-Man, the teenage superhero known affectionately to aficionados as "Spidey"; Thor, the surgeon turned Norse god with the mystical hammer and the Shakespearean speech pattern; and finally Dr. Strange, the oddball magician who uses his Satanic powers on the side of good.

After you read the big full-color stories and learn about the first heady inspirations from Stan, you will see why Origins of Marvel Comics stands alone as one of the great classics -- an undying tribute to Marvel mania.

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